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By the same Author.

LIVING FOR THE MASTER.

SERMONS. By LEWIS H. REID.

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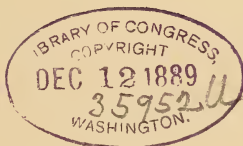
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LEWIS H. REID.

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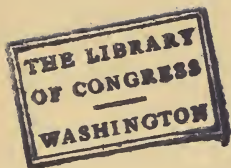


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INTRODUCTION.

THESE Sermons, like those of the preceding volume, — “Living for the Master,” — are selected with reference to their adaptation for general use. They are short, simple, and practical, and they present no views but such as are held by believers generally, in the different branches of the Church of Christ. As such they will be found suitable for private reading, or convenient for public use in the absence of a pastor.

The writer takes pleasure in dedicating this volume to former parishioners and other friends.

L. H. R.



ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD.

WE may have evidence of God's being and character, without comprehending His plans. The present state is a fragment of an immense scheme. That there is a moral sphere, in which man lives and moves and has his being, is as obvious as that there is a material sphere. Life has a meaning, and it may have a beauty and a destiny worthy of that divine tuition by which it is in training for an immortal sphere. To recognize the existence and laws of the moral system, is the obligation by which reason is bound.

EZRA H. GILLETT.

I.

ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD.

Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. — JOB xxii. 21.

THAT was good advice. Job was in trouble; it was not because he did not know God,—he knew Him better than his friends knew Him; but they thought his trouble came from not knowing God, and so they gave him this counsel. Sometimes men give advice that they do not follow themselves. We dislike to take medicine; but if we see one that needs it, we are not backward in suggesting remedies.

Good for Eliphaz! The advice was sound,—“Acquaint thyself with God.” Nothing could be better. But friends do not always counsel alike. One will say, “I would do so and so,—see such a person, or use such a remedy.” Another will say, “You had better do this or that.” But a little while before, Zophar, another friend, had spoken of the knowledge of God as impossible,—“high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?” But if God could not be known absolutely, He might be in part; so that there was no real contradiction here. We shall never know God perfectly, for then we should need to be equally as great as He; but we may follow on to know Him, and be growing more and more into

resemblance to and acquaintance with Him. There are degrees of knowledge and fellowship among men. "Are you acquainted with Mr. So-and-so?" "Somewhat," you say, or "I know him well." What knowledge have you of God? Alas that it is so small! Perhaps you are not on speaking terms with God. Do you speak His name, — not in profanity, but reverence? Do you go to Him and talk with Him, and tell Him how you feel and what you want? Are you on speaking terms with God? Or is He like some stranger whom you know well enough on the street: you know his name, and where he lives, and something about his character and business; but you never walked with him, never talked with him, said "Good morning," took his hand, or counted him your friend.

The Temanite's advice was good for Job; and it is good for all: "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee."

There are many ways of becoming acquainted with God. If I wished to get acquainted with some person whose friendship I valued, I might ask another to introduce me, or I might come in contact with him in business, or some casual circumstance might throw us together. Our first knowledge of God comes to us through *the outer world*. Every sense is a medium of introduction. So we study human character. I know a man by his works. A piece of mechanism, fine or bungling, tells me what the man is. A fine piece of statuary or a life-breathing painting shows the artist's skill. I judge of character by the handwriting. A letter may be all I wish to see or know of a man. A little Christmas gift wrought by loving fingers may

reveal the thought and quality of a friendly heart. So God speaks to us through His works. Under the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral the distinguished architect, Sir Christopher Wren, is buried, who designed that famous structure as well as other remarkable buildings. On the monument over his tomb is a Latin inscription closing with the words: *Lector, si monumentum quæris, circumspice*, — "Reader, dost thou seek his monument? Look around." In God's great temple we stand, and see the evidences of His handiwork in all the things around. From Nature we cannot help rising up to Nature's God. The commonest shrub by the wayside speaks of God; the tiniest flower reveals a world of beauty; the physical frame evidences wonderful power and wisdom; the microscope sends us down into a realm of organized existence. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." The eye sees, the ear hears, the hand touches nothing that does not speak of God.

We also become acquainted with God through *the soul of man*. Man was made in the image of God. Nothing else bears this likeness: you see the Father in the child. The temple of Nature is to be destroyed by fire; the material heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: but that which constitutes ourselves shall survive "the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds." The soul is immortal; its own consciousness, its nature and longings, proclaim this. Reason and experience demand this. Heathen philosophy certifies, and the Being who made and endowed the soul affirms, that it is to live forever. The human intellect with its

grand powers speaks of God. The inward monitor, conscience, is deity speaking within us. To converse with ourselves is in some sense to converse with God. We cannot know ourselves, know our hearts, know our powers, without knowing God.

God is known also through *His providences*. Not a sparrow falls without our Father, and the hairs of our head are all numbered. I believe in special providences; it is in these that we can very manifestly hear our Father's voice and feel the pressure of His hand. History abounds with remarkable instances of an overruling Power. The destiny of nations has been determined by the slightest causes. It is common to speak of Rome as saved by the cackling of geese. The Scotch thistle is said to have become the national emblem because a thistle once pierced a soldier's foot and gave timely warning of the approaching foe. The Covenanters were confident of God's presence with them in the snow-barriers that He raised and the cloud-mists that He sent in immediate answer to prayer. Poetry confesses to a special providence when it says: "There is a divinity that shapes our ends." We do not understand how this control is exercised, or this shaping done; and yet we cannot doubt the fact. I knew of a lady who made all her arrangements to sail in the ill-fated "Ville du Havre," but at the last moment changed her plan and was saved. On the contrary, the daughter of the late Rev. Dr. Goertner intended to leave in another vessel, but at the last moment, for the sake of being with friends, changed her arrangements, took the vessel named, and with her two children perished.

We cannot explain these things now ; but it is not Chance or Fate. There are those who say that God has nothing to do with the affairs of men ; then it is a sorry world in which we live. We may wish to push God away, and not know Him ; but He seems to compel us to know Him by coming near and passing before us in marked events. It is one thing to deny providences, and another to explain providences. Men who attempt to explain providences may be wrong, but it does not follow that there are no providences, or that God has nothing to do with events that we call such.

Again, God may be known through *His word*. This is the second volume of His communication with man, — Nature first, and Revelation next. What Nature does not teach, the Bible does. If a letter tells us what a friend is, the Bible tells us what God is. The command to acquaint ourselves with God, is a command to read the Bible. I believe those know most of God who read their Bibles most. This is the grand text-book ; there are others, but this is better than any that I have yet mentioned. The Psalmist writes : “Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name.” There is a glory in the heavens and in the earth, but a greater glory emanates from this blessed Book. Here is where you shall see God and know Him and hear His voice ; in these lines He speaks to you. I like to see the worn Bible, the tear-stained page ; the little Testament that a mother’s prayers have hallowed, the Bible that the young man treasures and reads and makes the man of his counsel and the guide of his life, and that shows by its handling that it is much used. Do not neglect

your Bible; search the Scriptures daily; read this Book often and much, if you wish to know God. The Sabbath-school might properly be styled the Bible-school. It is by the study of the Bible that we are trying to make our scholars, young or old, acquainted with their Maker, — God.

Another method of becoming acquainted with God is through *His Son Jesus Christ*. This perhaps is the best method, or is *the* method. We sing of God as

“Known through the earth by thousands signs,
By thousand through the skies;”

but the Gospel scheme is a grand mirror which exhibits the perfect God:—

“Here the whole Deity is known;
Nor dares a creature guess
Which of the glories brightest shone,
The justice or the grace.”

It is God whom we see in the face of Jesus Christ, who is declared to be “the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.” He is as if an exact image or photograph of the Father. He is more than this. There is such a oneness that seeing and knowing Him is seeing and knowing God. He says, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him. . . . He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” “I and My Father are one.” If God then seem distant from us; if we feel an awe that keeps us from approaching Him; if we dare not venture on a

familiarity such as we enjoy with some loved friend, — then we may come into intimacy with God in the humanity of His Son. It was partly for this reason that God veiled Himself in humanity, that He might press us closer to His paternal bosom. The Swedenborgian knows no God but Christ. The God-man supplies his idea of deity. Acquaint thyself with Him; become the intimate and friend of the Lord Jesus Christ; study His life; be baptized into His Spirit; walk in His footsteps. Come and live in His family; enroll yourself among His visible followers. The best way to know a man is to live in his home and sit at his board. Jesus invites you to the intimacies of His table; He is willing to be your friend, and He desires to know you. Will you keep yourself outside the circle of His loved ones, and be of those who know Him not, and to whom at last He shall say, "I never knew you"? In the prayer to the Father just before the betrayal, Jesus said: "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Do not turn away, then, from this historic Jesus, for it is by and through Him that we know and come to God.

Still another method of knowing God is by *His Spirit*. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." "The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us." You need the Divine Spirit as a teacher and help. The Holy Comforter is sent to teach you all things and to make you know God. You are dependent, but you must be willing to learn. Ask the Spirit to be your helper and guide. Think of a child sitting down to a new study,

opening a difficult book, and not being willing to have teacher or help! You will make no headway, you will never know God, if you do not seek the Spirit's help.

We must not forget that there are special reasons or inducements for knowing God; these are brought to view in the second part of the text. "*Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.*" See, peace is spoken of. Reconciliation with God brings peace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." You have no peace till you know God. Your weary, aching heart cannot rest till it rests in God. You may be soothed temporarily, but the sure condition of peace comes only in a loving knowledge of God. Secular learning does not give peace; philosophy has no antidote for the world's ills; friendship cannot dispel troubles; pleasure and riches and fame give no true rest. The soul yearns for its Maker, and it finds its cravings met only when they are met in God. Says a popular writer: "Faith draws the poison from every grief, takes the sting from every loss, and quenches the fire of every pain; and only faith can do it. Wisdom, science, power, learning,—all these are as blind and impotent before the great problem of life as ignorance and weakness. The feeblest girl, believing in God and a hereafter, is an archangel by the side of the strongest man who questions her simple faith, and mounts on wings where he stumbles in doubt and distress or sinks in darkness."

This is the peace that faith furnishes; this is the peace that comes from the knowledge of God. "Ac-

quaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee."

What that good is, Eliphaz explains thus: "If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways." That is equivalent to saying: "Make God your friend, and you shall not want any good. You shall attain the highest prosperity. Your mind will be enlarged with noble purposes, and your soul be filled with all the fulness of God. Selfishness bedwarfs; worldiness fetters: knowledge of God shall make you a true man. Your moral nature will be purified and quickened. You shall be at peace with God, with the world, and with yourself. You shall have a quiet conscience; you shall have divine supports in trouble; you shall have blessed hopes; you shall triumph in death; you shall have part in the resurrection of the just. You shall stand with conquerors; you shall sing with the redeemed!" Oh, what a mockery is language when it attempts to describe the blessedness of the man who knows God! Here, then, I stand commissioned to urge and bring you to God, — asked to make you know Him, to introduce you to Him, to impress you with the

desirableness of having Him for your friend. "Tell them," I hear the Great Being saying, "of Me and My home. Show them that I am not hard or exacting, revengeful or stern. Emphasize the loving elements of My character, and make them know that I will take them to My bosom, if they will repent and return. Tell them that there is bread enough and to spare, and that My love reaches to every penitent heart, and is greater than human sinfulness and need." Oh that some of you might be persuaded even now to know and love this sin-pardoning God! My dear friend, troubled perhaps in your soul, dissatisfied with your present condition, asking, "What must I do?" — "Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace." Observe, — "now!" "acquaint now!" Perhaps you are a father, with children waiting to have you know God, that they may know Him too: come, bring your little ones; give them to God, and become yourself a child with them in the Christian household. Perhaps you are a young person needing a helping hand and superior wisdom: come, grasp this Hand that is offered you, and accept Almighty love and aid. Here is a duty that confronts you; here is a good to be secured. Delay no longer, but in humility and contrition say: "Lord, I give myself to Thee; own me as Thine." Waiting will not make you better, or give you strength. It is due your Maker and Redeemer, due yourself, due your children if you are a parent, due your friends and companions, whatever may be your age, that you should now become an open and recognized disciple of the Lord Jesus.

SECRET FAULTS.

It is not easy for a man to know himself. Death, says Seneca, falls heavy upon him who is too much known to others, and too little to himself; and Pontanus, a man celebrated among the early restorers of literature, thought the study of our own hearts of so much importance that he recommended it from his tomb.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

II.

SECRET FAULTS.

Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. — PSALM xix. 12.

ALL men are sinners. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Good men sin. It is David who offers the prayer of the text, — "Cleanse Thou me."

There are sins of omission and of commission ; sins of thought, of word, and of deed. We may sin against God and against man ; against our neighbor, our family, and ourselves. The law of God is so comprehensive, our hearts are so deceitful, and the occasions are so numerous that lead us into sin, that even those who make the most effort to lead a holy life may suitably ask, "Who can understand his errors ?"

It is to a particular class of faults that I wish to call your attention, — "secret faults." By "secret" faults is not meant faults which we keep concealed from others, secret as our private affairs are secret, but secret in the sense that they are hidden or concealed from ourselves. Then there are sins of error, inadvertence, or infirmity, into which we readily fall. That we do commit sins that are unknown to ourselves, is true. We probably commit sins every day of which we take no note, and with no consciousness of wrong-doing ; yet

they are sins. It was from these hidden errors that the psalmist desired to be cleansed. Sins of ignorance are frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. And what is a sin of ignorance but a sin of which the person committing it was not conscious at the time? Still it is a sin, for the one who committed it might and ought to have known better. His conscience should have been better enlightened, or he should have waited longer before acting. Under the Levitical law provision was made for those who sinned inadvertently or unwittingly, a simple sacrifice sufficing in this case; while the same offence, if committed knowingly and presumptuously, subjected the offender to excommunication and death. The language is used, "If a soul shall sin through ignorance,"—indicating that it is still *sin*, though committed in ignorance. The Saviour makes a distinction between the disobedient servant that knew his lord's will, and the one that did not know it. The latter received "few" stripes. Yet he received stripes,—he was punished. His neglect or omission was wrong, though originating in ignorance. The fact of his ignorance could not exculpate him. He "knew not," yet he sinned. Christ offered the mitigating plea, "For they know not what they do." Paul speaks of what he did ignorantly in unbelief. He persecuted the Church of God, and not only thought that he was doing right, but was doing God service. His wrong act he regarded not only as right, but as commendable; but afterwards he saw it to be sinful, and so spoke of it. "When the commandment came, sin revived." Now, I say that there may be states of mind or acts which we commit which we

think to be right, or give but little attention to, that are sinful. We may sin inadvertently ; we may transgress when we do not know it ; we may have " secret faults " from which we should earnestly pray to be cleansed. Let me now classify and enumerate.

1. The sins of a *false education*.—The heathen mother used to lead her little child, as soon as it could walk, into the presence of a dumb idol ; and pressing the child's hands together in a reverent attitude, and pushing its head forward, compelled it to do obeisance to that senseless idol. The child could hardly walk alone before it was thus instructed ; and if it were at all refractory, it received cuffs and blows, till it learned to act the part of a devout worshipper. Or that mother, under the false instruction she had received, tore the babe from her bosom and threw it into the sacred river. There was no feeling of regret at her act ; very likely there was a feeling of satisfaction. And when her husband died, she went forth, in accordance with what she had been taught and believed to be duty, and laid herself on the funeral-pile. All these acts she believed to be right ; she believed idolatry to be right, for she was so taught in her childhood. She imparted the same instruction to her children, and made idolaters of them ; or she cast them into the Ganges, or submitted to a voluntary death herself, under the same terrible and false impressions. In all these acts she sinned, yet she did not know it. Now, may not a false education lead us into sin ? May not conscience be so overladen or perverted that it shall not become a safe guide, and deeds be committed that we may call right that are nevertheless wrong ? The

Spartans taught their children that it was right to steal, and a greater offence to be caught in the act than to commit the crime. People differ at the present day with regard to many social habits and customs. What some consider right, others consider wrong. But if theatres, cards, dancing, and wine are not right, or are abused, those persons who consider them right err, and their error belongs to the class of secret faults. Whereas if a thing is right, and one does it, questioning whether it is right, he sins, for "He that doubteth is condemned."

It is quite possible that we may say and do things which God looks upon as wrong, but which we judge to be right simply because parents, teachers, or others — those whose influence we have felt and are feeling — have taught us so. That we have been educated to believe that a certain thing is right, does not make it so. We must be sure that the instruction is right, or that the principles are right, before we can assume that the acts under them are right.

2. Sins of *prejudice*. — Men assume that they are right, and condemn others, thinking the bitterness of their feelings justifiable, because it is a supposed wrong that they are condemning. But perhaps the wrong is with themselves. Or, even admitting that another is at fault, they may be more at fault in indulging a vindictive spirit towards him. We may pursue evil and attempt to remove it in a bad spirit, and think that because the end is good the act is right. Bigots and persecutors have always been willing to justify themselves on the plea that it was a good end that they were seeking. They assume that truth and

right are with them, and then go forth to kill and destroy. Paul's sin of ignorance was a sin of prejudice. He was honest in thinking the Jewish religion right, and the Christian wrong ; and hence concluded that he was justified in opposing the new faith.

The sin of the Jews was a sin of prejudice. They assumed that they were right, and were ready to invoke a curse on their own heads if they were not. They sinned ignorantly, but their ignorance resolved itself into bigotry and hate.

How many appalling spectacles does the history of the past reveal ! How many martyrs and confessors have laid down their lives for the truth ! But those who persecuted them did this under the impression or plea that they were subserving a good cause, that the best interests of the Church and of the State required this. Some, no doubt, deluded and prejudiced, were honest in their convictions. Persons often condemn in others that which they are guilty of themselves. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." Criticism and denunciation are uttered, when he who speaks may be most at fault. The lines of Burns are apposite : —

"Oh wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as others see us !
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
An' foolish notion."

"To see ourselves as others see us," is to see ourselves as we are ; in other words, it is to see our faults, our errors, foibles, failings, which are now secret, because hidden from our own view.

3. Sins of *custom*. — “Everybody does it,” is a plea that quiets many a conscience and justifies many an act. It is with many not so much, “What is right or wrong?” but “What do others think and do?” If public sentiment justifies certain practices, we are likely to fall into them without many scruples or much delay. We assume that a thing is right because it is so common; we extenuate an act by saying, “Why, it is done everywhere, and by all.” There are many things that are practised in matters of trade that, to one uninitiated, seem questionable, but when it is found that all do so, or that many do so, are assumed to be right. In many speculating operations, whether of stocks or produce, in rates of interest received or given, and indeed in all commercial transactions, there are methods and practices that are recognized as legitimate, and that with certain modifications may be legitimate, and yet that are in many cases positively wrong. The subject of usury is full of perplexity. Money has a different value at different times, and to one in straightened circumstances may be worth twice as much as when he is less in need. How is it possible, then, to fix a positive value to it by law, and why are the rates of interest so different in different States? It is manifest that custom rather than conscience sometimes becomes the standard of law. We see the same thing in social life. People are expected to pass compliments, to indulge in flattery, and to do many insincere things, “for everybody does so.” You would be singular, strange, if you did not, in speech, dress, and behavior, do as others do. Even falsehood comes to be regarded as truth, and a lie is justified on the plea that it is

well understood. "Not at home" means "not to be seen;" and "I am glad to see you," must be taken in a general way.

4. Sins of *habit*.—Sin has a hardening influence. The more familiar we become with it, the less odious does it appear. "We first endure, then pity, then embrace." What was once offensive becomes agreeable; what was once wrong seems right. At least we may sin so often, and the habit become so fixed, that we shall sin without knowing it. Do you suppose that the profane swearer takes note of the oaths that he utters? Once the awful imprecation startled him; he spoke God's name with hesitancy and fear. But now in sport and in wrath, with terrible frequency, God's name is profaned. If you should attempt to check him, he perhaps would express surprise, apologize, and say that he did not mean to use such language. So in regard to intoxicating liquors. The person who sells or uses them may question at first whether it is right to do so; but when, by and by, the conscience is seared and the habit is fixed, there is but little sense of sin. So in regard to other fleshly indulgences. The debasement and debauchery of the "community" system, the promiscuous marriages of the Mormons, are a proof of the ease with which people come to justify outrageous acts of wrong. Again, fits of anger may be so often indulged in as to fail at length of awaking remorse or shame. A person from his very habit of sinning may conclude that he has a right to sin. He is angry so often that he does not know that he is angry, or thinks that he has a right to be angry; or he is peevish, and speaks in an ill-natured tone so constantly that he does

not know how unmusical his voice is. Or some other disposition of mind is fixed upon him. He is jealous, or envious, or penurious, or thoughtless and heedless, and in the very exercise of these qualities never suspects that he is doing wrong. The fact that that is his nature, and that he has done so so many times, seems to be a reason or excuse with him why he should do so again.

5. Lastly, acts committed in *ignorance of a positive statute*.—A person may transgress unwittingly. I may visit an art gallery, or walk in a public park, and disregard some regulation unconsciously and unintentionally. I may remove to another country, with the laws and customs of which I am not familiar, and make myself amenable when I had no thought of doing wrong. In the Life of Washington Irving we have an account of his committing a trivial offence of this kind while residing in Saxony. The legal penalty for the act was a fine of twenty dollars and forfeiture. He was in Dresden, and having borrowed a pistol, and finding that it was loaded, opened the window and discharged the weapon into the open air. Though having previously been presented to the King and Queen, and known to be a man of letters, and sinning ignorantly, he nevertheless was arrested, underwent a trial, and was fined to the amount of a few dollars and costs. A few evenings after, he was a guest at the palace, the King good-naturedly joking him about breaking the law. It is easy to see that transgressions may often be committed when the letter of the statute is not known. Paul seems to have corrected himself when he said, in reply to the charge, "Revilest thou God's high priest?"

"I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest : for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." The specifications and requirements of the Levitical Code were so exact and numerous that it was not to be wondered at if a conscientious Jew sometimes unwittingly transgressed. It was right, therefore, that the possibility of such transgression should be recognized in words like these, "If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done," and that a sin-offering should be indicated and accepted in such a case. The transgressions of the heathen are those that are committed against unwritten law. They cannot be said to trample on the blood of Christ if they never heard of Him. Their offence consists in not obeying the "law in their mind." There is little for us to plead in this direction ; and yet, when we remember that the law is exceeding broad, that it relates to a man's inmost thoughts, as well as all his outer life, we can see that we may often transgress the spirit of a commandment when we do not know it.

Now, let me recall the points presented. Secret faults, or those which we do not notice in ourselves, are those which we may commit (1) through a *false education*. We may be taught to believe that things are right which are not. (2) *Prejudice* may lead us to justify ourselves in acts that are wrong. (3) *Custom*, common law, what everybody does, may ease the conscience and establish precedents that truth, if listened to, must condemn. (4) *Habit* makes sin so familiar that the enormity of it is not seen ; and (5) *ignorance*

of the written statute may lead us to transgress unwittingly.

Now, let me remark: 1. We see that we may be more wicked than we think that we are! Our secret faults, our unknown sins, who can count or name them? It is enough to have such a catalogue of positive transgressions charged against us. But here is a ledger account with which the record that we have kept bears no comparison. To one sin noticed, there have been a score not noticed! Oh, how often have we sinned when we gave it no thought, or did not know it! Even of known sin it is impossible to estimate the consequences or to compute the guilt, for these reach into eternity; how, then, can we measure or gauge guilt that is unknown?

2. How singular is the prayer of the text! We pray to be cleansed from faults that we do not know ourselves,—from errors, delinquencies, and failings that our wives or husbands, our children, our servants, or our clerks see, but which we do not see! More than all, God sees them,—He knows them, and can cancel and remove them. It is not necessary that we should know all our faults, or designate them by name, before we can ask forgiveness. Here is a comprehensive prayer, and we may offer it. The dying thief simply said, "Lord, remember me," and it was enough. The spirit of penitence is that which includes all sin. At the same time we are to guard against presuming on general prayers. Self-searching is enjoined. If we have right feelings, we shall be desirous to know the worst of our case. This leads to humility, special watchfulness, and striving against sin.

3. Finally, how wonderful the grace of God, that can reach down and under all that a man is and does, and take him, with all his sins, known and unknown, and lift him to a higher plane, effect in him a double cure, cleanse him from the guilt and power of sin, and make him a child of God and an heir of glory! His condition here is one of repentings and tears; but he shall by and by walk with those in white, and become a pillar in the temple of his God.

Be it ours to avail ourselves of this grace! Let us seek to know the worst of our case, search our hearts, and lift the cry, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

STRENGTH EQUAL TO OUR DAYS.

DR. DODDRIDGE was one day walking, much depressed, his very heart desolate within him. "But," says he, "passing a cottage door open, I happened at that moment to hear a child reading, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' The effect on my mind was indescribable; it was like life from the dead."

WILLIAM JAY.

III.

STRENGTH EQUAL TO OUR DAYS.

And as thy days, so shall thy strength be. — DEUT. xxxiii. 25.

HOW much we think of the blessing of a dying parent! We would go a long way to get such a blessing; and when the words are spoken, how tenderly we cherish them!

Jacob blessed his twelve sons as he lay upon his dying bed in Egypt. One of these sons was Asher, whom Zilpah, Leah's maid, bore to Jacob. Jacob's blessing was this: "Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties." That is supposed to mean that the descendants of Asher should occupy a rich country, furnishing plenty for themselves and others. Asher means "happy," or "blessed." At his birth "Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed; and she called his name Asher," — "Blessed." Somehow, in olden times, parents sometimes gave names that were prophetic of destiny. We speak of children that are born to fortune: that was the case with Asher. He obtained his father Jacob's blessing, and from Asher sprang a great tribe in Egypt. When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, which was two hundred years after Jacob died, the tribe of Asher had increased to fifty-three

thousand four hundred men above twenty years old, besides women and children. When they reached the land of Canaan, and the country was parcelled out to the several tribes,—as good fortune would have it, we might say, though there was a providence in it fulfilling Jacob's prediction, — the people of the tribe of Asher were settled along the sea-board, in a part of the country specially fruitful in grain, wine, oil, and minerals.

Moses led the Israelites only to the borders of Canaan, he was not allowed to enter and see the people settle in it. He now is about to die, and another blessing is to be pronounced upon Asher. Moses assembles the people, as his last act before he goes up to Mount Nebo, and this is his dying blessing upon Asher. "Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." I have brought these two blessings of Jacob and Moses together, though they were two hundred years apart, that you might see how closely they tally. Jacob blessed his sons; Moses blessed the tribes descended from those sons. The blessing of Moses is fivefold. First, there is the blessing of *numbers*. "Let Asher be blessed with children." Children are a blessing, not a burden. "Let him be acceptable to his brethren." It is a great thing to please others, to live in peace with those around us. "Let him dip his foot in oil;" that is, "Let him have such plenty that he may not only anoint his head with oil, but walk or wade in it for abundance." "Thy shoes shall be iron and

brass." Some think that this means that the land should be full of minerals, — as it was ; the people literally walking over hidden treasures. Others think that the expression, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass," was proverbial, indicating a preparation of the feet to travel in rough roads, or to climb slippery places. "And as thy days, so shall thy strength be." That was the cap-sheaf ; that crowns all. Blessed words ! How they do come down to us over the centuries, to comfort our hearts to-day ! If spoken to Asher, they are meant also for us. The promises to the fathers include the children ; and so we read with personal application to ourselves : "As *thy* days, so shall *thy* strength be."

Days of darkness are appointed to every one. Each year comes to us listed with its days of rain as well as its days of sunshine. We cannot tell what days are to be dark, but we surely know that some will be. If we knew beforehand, we might plan our circumstances to meet these changes, dropping out the dark days from our life-calendar. Our journeys, excursions, visits, weddings, would all be arranged for the days that shine. But we have to move forward into the future, not knowing what the morrow will bring, and yet confident that between us and the future lie many dark days. It is just as absurd to expect that life shall witness no days of tear-shedding as to expect that the sky shall never gather blackness or send down rain. At the same time weeping does not come to all alike ; the times and the occasions are different. As over one tract of country a heavy cloud may hang, and copious showers descend, while perhaps on the dis-

tant mountain-top you can see the sun shining ; so on some hearts griefs may be sitting, while on other hearts close by, joys may yet beam. Nor can any modern prophet forecast the moral climatic changes by which it shall be known where or on whom the storm of sorrow is soon to fall. As all lands, with the variations and alternations, get their fair proportion of rain and sunshine, so all hearts get their just amount of joy and pain. There is not so great a difference in the lots of men as we sometimes think. When it comes to the real issue, there is scarcely a person with whom we would be willing to change places. We would like to select from another's circumstances ; but if we must take his infirmities, his griefs, his cares and troubles, we are content to remain as we are.

Nor are dark days without their uses. We shudder at them, and yet they may be among the most valuable portions of our life. One of Dr. Bushnell's remarkable discourses was on " The moral uses of dark things." If Nature could do best with one undarkened sky and never-setting sun, the clouds would never gather, and the night never come. But the sky's tears have value, and the stilly night rests vegetation for the drawing and unfolding influence of another day. It would be a pity if there were no tears and heart-aches, no pensive moments, no days when the soul, lone and dreary, hears only the dropping on the roof and the patter on the window-pane. The discipline of sorrow is soul-refining ; the whole man grows best under the alternations of sun and rain. I have no doubt, when we reach heaven, that we shall be almost ready to reverse our estimates. What we now

call good, we shall then esteem lightly or see was harmful ; and what we now call evil, we shall then see was sent in love and wisdom, and brought higher gain. We certainly are misjudging creatures, and very far at present from calling things by their right names. A friend writing to me concerning a great sorrow, said : " That nearly killed me. Oh, how I suffered ! Now I look back, and think how unwise I was, am glad that it happened, and feel that God was leading me all the way." Good old Jacob said : " Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away : all these things are against me." And yet the providences were conspiring that were to bring him to see his children and fill his soul with joy. Joseph said to his brethren : " As for you, ye thought evil against me ; but God meant it unto good." He contrasted the anguish of his soul, and his unheard entreaties, when his brethren thrust him into the pit, with the power and greatness to which that path of suffering had led. It is a common saying, " The way of the cross is the way of light." Darkness correlates the day.

" Out of my stony griefs Bethel I 'll raise."

Moreover, others may be benefited by the woes that we feel. The child sees the tear in the mother's eye, and does not know its cause, but is subdued into a tender and loving frame of mind. The cloud-shadow may be the best for the rearing of these young plants. The father sees his business destroyed, his fortune gone, and is utterly cast down ; but that was simply an overruling providence to keep his children from prodigality and ruin. So, then, if Providence gave us the

arrangement of our lives, and put us in charge of the moral weather-currents, I doubt whether we should be willing to strike out one dark day from the calendar, or to avert one painful experience of rain and storm.

But while sorrows belong to us, and have their uses, there is much in the way of evil that we make for ourselves. We throw a roof over our heads that hides the sun, or we go down into the cellar and call it dark ; in other words, we imagine and forebode evil, we fancy ills, and shudder in view of that which never happens. There is much borrowing of trouble in this world. We have not enough in the present, and so we draw on the future. We cross bridges before we come to them, and when we reach the point where we thought they were, they are not there. We know that rainy days are in store for us, and so we raise the umbrella before the rain falls. I once had a little niece, who is now with the angels. She lived near a river, and but a short distance from a bridge where the river was crossed. It was in the spring of the year, and ice-gorges were frequent. There was danger that this bridge would be carried away, and the matter was much talked about. The child heard some things that were said, and was greatly exercised on account of them. After she had retired at night, her mother heard her sobbing, and inquired, "What is it, Louise?" The child replied, "I am afraid the bridge will go off." "Oh, no!" said her mother, "there is no danger; the ice has gone down the river, and the bridge is safe." Soon sobs were again heard. The mother returned, and tried to reassure the child. She explained to her

that there had been danger, but it was over now. The bridge was safe, and she must go to sleep. "But, Mamma," exclaimed the disconsolate child, "I am afraid the bridge will go off next year!" So do we, children of a larger growth, anticipate evil; we say "The bridge will go off next year."

The text is an admonition against distrust and fear. Even if there is a positive ill to be met, why should we let the shadow of it fall upon us now? The apostle speaks of those "who by reason of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage." On some persons evil looms up like a great cloud, and in the chilly mist of it they walk all their days. Jesus inculcated that we should take no thought for the morrow, — "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." He pointed to the birds of the air, that neither sow nor reap, and to the lilies, that neither toil nor spin, and said that if they were cared for by our Father in heaven, much more would we be cared for by Him. Improvidence is nowhere inculcated in the Scriptures, but an undue anxiety is forbidden. The fact that the birds do not sow, and that the lilies do not toil, is a reason why they should be without thought; but man must labor, and care is suitable for him. Still, he must not be too cautious, or be troubled with imaginary fears; he must not carry the burden of a necessity not yet reached, and perhaps never to be reached, and allow this to fret and stagger him by the way. You have noticed, as you have followed a travelled road and approached a hill, how high in the distance the hill seemed; but when you came nearer, the elevation grew less, and the height that looked so formidable was easily climbed. So is it

with many of the mountain fears over which our life pathway leads. Be patient, and you will surmount them all. Nor is it well to worry about the future, since the future may never become ours. I have seen the father laying up for the son; but the son dropped from his sight like a withered flower. I have seen the man of middle life laying up for old age; but he died before old age came on. The truth is, we are day-laborers. The great Taskmaster does not contract with us for a month, or a year, He hires us by the day. At each night-fall He says, "Well, you may come again in the morning;" but before another sun shall set He may say, "Your work is done."

And why do we wish to know what is to be? If we see the step for to-day, is not that enough? Why do we wish to know what lies after the present? If we see the present, is not that enough? So long as we have a safe guide, why not follow Him one step at a time? If you enter Mammoth Cave, you do not wish your guide to be too far from you. The torch may be in his hand, but there may be a yawning chasm between you and him. If you climb the Jungfrau, you do not care to be told what lies beyond the glaciers, but you want to see where now to plant your feet. More faith is needed, to stick closer to Christ, and to step just where He marks out the way. If He leads us down to the sea, or bids us penetrate a wall of adamant, we have only to march till our feet dip into the water, or our hand touches the wall, and then the water will part, or a passage open, and the way be revealed. If we say, "What shall we do when we get there?" we carry an unnecessary weight. "Who

shall roll us away the stone?" said the disciples on the way to the sepulchre; but when they arrived there, the stone was rolled away. "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" asked the innocent Isaac; when lo! the substitute was found. Numberless are the illustrations which show that man's extremity is God's opportunity, and prove that it is safest to trust in God at all times.

I bring to you, then, child of the Covenant, this gracious assurance, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Days of not fancied, but real, need will overtake you: but you have an Almighty Friend on whom you can rely; He has strength to impart, and His word is sure.

There will come to you *days of temptation*. Satan will assault you. He assaulted Jesus; he aimed to sift Peter as wheat. But One stronger than Satan will see that you are not tempted above that you are able, and will with the temptation also make a way to escape.

You will experience *days of trial*, when your faith shall be tested like Abraham's, your patience proved like Job's, or your loyalty discovered as by the rack or the stake. But the same helping Hand shall be with you, shutting the mouth of lions, or keeping from your garments even the smell of fire.

You will chronicle in your history *days of danger*. Enemies may seek to destroy you, as Saul sought to destroy David; or you may from physical causes be in peril of your life. Then comes the sweet assurance, "He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways."

You will pass through *days of mourning*. But while the tears fall, you shall be wonderfully sustained.

There have been those who have felt that they should surely die if a child or friend were taken away ; and yet when the blow came, they confessed to a divine support of which they had had no knowledge before.

You will encounter *days of sickness*. But a sick bed may become a Pisgah height, from which you shall catch glimpses of the heavenly country.

You are coming to the *day of death*. Have no fear for that. Dying grace will be given you at the right time. Meanwhile, ask for living grace, and leave the needs of your last hours to Him who says : " I will never leave thee ; " " My grace is sufficient for thee ; " " My strength is made perfect in weakness ; " " As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

EARLY PIETY.

CHILDREN should be educated in and into the Church. Whatever our theory may be of the spiritual relation of the child to the Church, this is certain and true, that children should be consecrated to God from their birth. "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven." The Church should begin in the house.

SAMUEL IRENÆUS PRIME.

IV.

EARLY PIETY.

I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me. — PROV. viii. 17.

THE text declares that God loves those who love Him. This is what we should expect. We love those who love us; we cannot help it. Love begets love. The kind word, the beaming eye and smiling face, — especially kind acts and attentions, — have a kindling power, and draw out like expressions.

Again and again it is declared in the Scriptures that those who love God shall be loved by Him. Jesus said: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." And in His prayer at the last interview with His disciples, He used this language: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."

So then there is no uncertainty here. He who speaks, speaks positively and knowingly, and His word is true. This is what He says: "I love them that love Me." What a gracious word, what a glorious declaration! How much there is in it to draw the

heart of every one, and especially of the timid and doubting, to Him who thus speaks ! It would seem as if God wished to conciliate the affections of men, and of the young particularly, — as when a stranger speaks kindly to a timid child, extends the hand, or offers some attraction to interest and draw the child towards him. Shall any question, then, whether God will receive them ? Shall any fear that their unworthiness is too great ? Shall any think that they are too young to love God and to be loved by Him ?

The second part of the text gives still greater assurance. “ And those that seek Me early shall find Me.” The word rendered “ Seek Me early ” means “ Seek Me at the dawn of the day.” Some would regard the statement as applicable to all, and equivalent to the expression, “ Those that seek Me with earnestness and importunity shall find Me.” The man who has some important enterprise on hand, or wishes to perform an unusual amount of labor in a day, rises early, and with an intent mind, a quick step, and an active hand, attends to the business before him. So the man who manifests a like engagedness in religion will not fail of his end. Hence the Saviour said : “ Ask, and ye shall receive ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” We may, however, regard the words, “ Seek Me early,” as having reference to the *morning of life*.

1. It is a *promise to the young*. Are we told, every one that seeketh findeth ? — then much more, says the text, will they who seek in early life find. They shall meet with less difficulty in seeking ; they shall find, without the embarrassment and hindrances pertaining

to adult age. What more, then, by way of encouragement could the young ask? What inducement to seek in any case, when we know that we shall find? How often persons stake large sums upon uncertainties! They will leave many comforts and run many risks and endure much fatigue, on the mere possibility of obtaining a recompense. But here is a mine, the Proprietor of which says, "I know where the treasure lies, and if you will follow My directions, you shall find,—and in the case of the young, you shall find easily; it will require but little exploration and but little digging. The treasure is near you,—near the surface, near where you stand. Only set yourself to seeking, and you shall soon say, 'I have found, I have found!'"

It would seem as if God cared more for the conversion of the young than of those in mature or advanced life. From the prominence given to children in the Scriptures, the love expressed for them, the counsels and directions addressed to them, the promises relating to them, and especially the notice which Christ took of children, and from what He said of them, we may infer this. Besides, as they are more lovely to us, in their simplicity, innocence, and promise, so they must be to God. How is it possible for God to look upon one, who has long withstood His grace, with the same complacency that He would upon the child that has recently come from His hands, and upon whom, though inheriting a sinful nature, sin has not wrought so fearful a work? No wonder, then, that we find special invitations and encouragements addressed to the young.

2. Is it not clear that in early life it is *easier to repent* because there are fewer sins to repent of, because the habit of sinning is not so inveterate, and because the heart is more susceptible to tender impressions? Is it not to be expected, in this point of view, that God should desire — and what He desires we should desire — the conversion of moral beings at the period of life when conversion is easiest? Hence the exhortation to the young to remember their Creator “while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when they shall say, I have no pleasure in them.” This consideration should weigh with the young, and lead them to remember God and repent of sin now when grace is nigh. This is the golden moment; another like it will never return. The offer for one’s heart may be considered to be the greatest and most urgent at the beginning of life. It is as if a person wishing to buy a piece of property should come to the owner and agree to pay a certain sum for it. The offer is rejected, and he turns away. By and by he returns, and says, “I will pay a smaller sum,” and is again refused; and so he continues to come, but each time offers a sum less than before, till at last the owner is glad to sell at the lowest price. We say, then, to the young, “Accept God’s offer of love now; you will never see so favorable a time. Hear His voice: ‘Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the Guide of my youth?’”

3. Early piety commends itself, and is to be desired, *because of its relations to subsequent life*. How much of evil is by it avoided, and how much greater usefulness secured! Conversion in childhood leaves the

entire life for God; while at a later period a less amount and it may be but the dregs are given. In this case there is but little opportunity for doing good, while the whole previous life must be counted as lost, or worse than lost, in the evil done. To prevent that evil is of vast importance; but if now we can turn all those energies and powers to account, and make them positively efficient for good, it is still better. The stream that overspreads fruitful fields and occasions a great destruction of property and of human life would be well mastered if it could only be turned into legitimate channels and made to find its way peacefully to the sea. But it would be a greater triumph if it could be made at the same time an instrument of good, and compelled, as it rolls along, to turn wheel after wheel, and cause mill and factory to hum with the energies of a productive life. The converted child is such a stream. Admitting too that the adult convert may be useful, it is plain that he cannot be so useful as if he had begun sooner, not only with respect to time, but also with respect to advantages and qualifications. How hard to shape him to habits of benevolence, and to bring him to engage in active Christian labors! How the old traits cling to him and impair his usefulness, even when, in the judgment of charity, the person is actually renewed! But when a child is converted it is not like altering and repairing an old building, which retains the former features and is unsatisfactory, but it is beginning from the foundation, and making the superstructure what you wish. A symmetrical character is formed, duties become easy, and far greater efficiency is secured.

Besides, a late conversion interferes with the choice of a profession; and thus much good may be lost. Who knows but that if the mechanic or tradesman recently converted had been converted ten or twenty years before, he would not now be occupying some place of marked usefulness, exerting an untold influence? while now it is too late to change his profession, and all the good he does he must do in his present sphere. It may be said generally that the most useful men in the world were converted young; and the reason is obvious: if they had not been, they would not have been qualified to occupy such a place and to be thus useful. If the man who might otherwise go as a missionary to the heathen is not converted till he is established and settled in life, it is evident that he cannot then go, for the previous education and training are wanting. If our present missionaries and ministers and most influential collegiate and theological professors, for the same reason, had not been converted till recently, it is evident that they would not now be in those positions of influence and usefulness. Had Jonathan Edwards not been converted in early life, it is questionable, though he had the same powers of mind, whether we should ever have heard of his name; or had he attained distinction in some secular calling, it is not probable that he would have been half so useful or have left half so great a name. "Timothy Dwight was converted just in time to save his devoting his talents and energies to the profession of law. But though his studies had been directed towards that end, and though he was urged by influential friends to devote himself to public life, with the

promise, so far as it could be made, and the reasonable expectation, of being elected to the Continental Congress, yet his new experience so affected his heart and changed his purposes as to lead him ardently and resolutely to choose the sacred ministry." And who shall say that his choice was not well, or that his usefulness was not greatly promoted? The young may not all expect to become eminent, or think that youthful piety is to lift them all into conspicuous spheres; still it is true, and they may conclude, that if converted now, they will be much more useful than if converted at some distant day. With your eye, then, on the future, my youthful friends, with reference to the good you may yet do, it should be your wish and purpose to have a name and place among the friends of God now. What a stimulus is presented here also to parents and educators to be faithful in endeavoring to secure the conversion of the young!

4. How *beautiful is youthful piety!* As one of the hymns says: —

"Grace is a plant, where'er it grows,
Of pure and heavenly root,
But fairest in the youngest shows,
And yields the sweetest fruit."

Piety is beautiful in itself; but when grafted upon the gentle heart of childhood, it is especially so. Nor is youthful piety an object merely to please the eye, but also a power to move the heart. Where it is observed it adds impressive testimony to the value and excellence of religion. It has been the means of melting hearts that no other influence seemed to affect or

reach. Parents have been drawn by it to the cross, and brought to become themselves children again. Hardened sceptics have found arguments in it which they could not answer, and under its power been led to renounce their scepticism and cry for mercy. The memoirs of pious children have been blessed as an instrument of salvation to multitudes of souls. The story of the little Syracuse boy Scoville H. McCollum, not long after it was published, was the means of the conversion of upwards of twenty children; and if one such life shall in any measure be repeated, who can tell the amount of good that it may accomplish? In this sense a child may die a hundred years old. As a power in the world and an instrument of blessing, the child's life may mount to more than that of a great scholar or a great general. Oftentimes revivals of religion begin among the young in Sabbath-schools and work outward and upward till an entire people is aroused.

We have some instances of youthful piety furnished in the Scriptures, and it is a pleasure to dwell upon them. Every Sabbath-school scholar is acquainted with the history of little Samuel, whose mother consecrated him so early to the Lord; who waited upon Eli the high priest when the house of the Lord was at Shiloh; who heard the Lord calling him by name at night, and answered, "Here am I;" and who afterwards judged Israel through a long and useful life. Josiah was another holy child, who became king when only eight years old, and reigned in Jerusalem with great wisdom and excellence thirty-one years. "In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young,

he began to seek after the God of David his father; and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and neither declined to the right hand, nor to the left." Jeremiah is another who experienced regenerating grace when very young, and was even then designated to be a prophet. Examples of youthful piety united with princely birth and station are sometimes found on the pages of profane history. Such an instance we have in Edward VI. of England, son of Henry VIII., who was crowned when but nine years of age; he reigned six years, and died at the age of fifteen. It is stated that at his coronation, "which took place Feb. 20, 1547, he being then only nine years old, when three swords were brought, as signs of his being king of three kingdoms, he said there was one yet wanting. And when the nobles about him asked him what that was, he answered, 'The Bible!' 'That book,' added he, 'is the sword of the Spirit, and to be preferred before these swords. That in all right ought to govern us who use the sword by God's appointment for the people's safety. He who rules without the Bible is not to be called God's minister or a king. From that alone we obtain all power, virtue, grace, salvation, and whatsoever we have of divine strength.'" Other anecdotes are related concerning this youthful and pious king. The young Lord Douglas was another interesting personage. When about to die it is stated that he called his younger brother to his side, upon whom his title and estate were to descend, and said: "I am about to die, and you are to be Lord Douglas; but while you will be only a prince on earth, I shall reign as a

king in heaven." We may not multiply instances like these. Let the example of holy children, in all the walks of life, win not only the approbation of the young, but also lead them to pattern after the example thus furnished.

5. It is a serious consideration that if the young do not seek the Lord now, they may *never in the future have the opportunity*. These few brief years, my youthful friends, may be all that you will see. Death may come to you and find you, not like youths that are prepared, but wholly unprepared; and then sad will your condition be. In every cemetery there are little graves.

"As you look around o'er the hallowed ground,
Little graves here and there you see;
And they seem to say as you thither stray,
'There's a grave in this ground for thee.'
And the bell may toll for a youthful soul
Fled away to the God who gave,
While the mouldering clay from the light of day
Shall be hid in the cold, cold grave."

Dear child, beloved youth, put not off this great matter of securing the friendship of God. Oh, gracious words, "I love them that love Me, and those that seek Me early shall find Me!"

THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON.

THEY who live in sin ; they who indulge in revelry ; they who are profane and sacrilegious ; they who abuse the mercies of God and live to deride sacred things, — can never be certain that in a moment, by the revelation of their guilt to their own souls, and by a sudden message from the eternal world, they may not be overwhelmed with the deepest consternation.

ALBERT BARNES.

V.

THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON.

*In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.
And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old. — DANIEL v. 30, 31.*

THIS was the end of one of the most powerful kingdoms of the world. It had stood for seventeen hundred years. Its destruction occurred about 500 B. C. It appears that the descendants of Noah, one hundred and twenty years after the Flood, undertook the erection of the tower of Babel. This stood in a plain, and was the starting-point of the city of Babylon. After the confusion of tongues a portion of the builders probably remained there, and thus the city was founded. The tower, it is thought, was completed, and called the tower of Belus, which stood within the city, and is still identified among those ancient ruins. Babylon was enlarged, or rebuilt, as some persons suppose, by Semiramis, the Assyrian queen, 1200 B. C., and reached its highest splendor under Nebuchadnezzar, grandfather of Belshazzar spoken of in the text.

It was a city of great magnificence. All around it were walls sixty miles in circumference, three hundred feet high, and seventy-five feet wide. The walls formed

a square; in front of and parallel with the walls was a deep trench. The city was laid out like a checker-board. In each of the four walls were twenty-five brazen gates, and from these, streets crossed to the gates on the opposite side. Thus twenty-five streets crossed each other at right angles, with a gate at each end. Each street was fifteen miles in length. The city was built on the Euphrates, which ran from north to south, and divided the city into two nearly equal parts. On each side of the river was a quay, with a wall of the same thickness as the walls of the city. In these walls were gates of brass, and from the quay steps descended into the river. These gates and steps were where the streets crossed the river. There was a bridge thrown across the river of remarkable beauty and contrivance. At each end of the bridge was a palace, and these palaces had a subterranean communication. To prevent the overflowing of the river high embankments or levees were raised; two canals also were cut to turn the water into the Tigris. On the western side of the city was an artificial lake forty miles square, and excavated to the depth of thirty-five feet, into which they turned the river till the work on the canals and embankments was completed. The palace of Nebuchadnezzar was situated in an enclosure six miles in extent. Within this also were the famous hanging-gardens, which were constructed upon an immense artificial mound four hundred feet high. The tower of Belus rose six hundred feet above the plain. These hanging-gardens were sustained by arches upon arches, which were terraced off for trees and flowers. Water was furnished from the river by machinery

concealed in the mound. Thus the city seemed to sit as a queen. It is said of the inhabitants at this time that they were renowned for learning, especially in astronomy, and for skill in various arts, as the making of carpets, cloths, perfumes, jewelry, etc. The situation of the city gave it the control of business by the Euphrates and by caravans between the East and the West, and into its lap flowed, by commerce or conquest, the wealth of almost all known lands. Hence we find it called "a city of merchants;" "the great;" "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency;" "the lady of kingdoms;" and so on.

But following upon greatness and opulence came luxury and pride, and then public corruption and dissoluteness of morals. Heathen deities were worshipped with impure rites; the people were given to wine and immoderate pleasures; women were present at convivial feasts, and gross indecencies were committed. No people, perhaps, ever made themselves so vile.

Now we turn from this proud and corrupt city to note the prophecies concerning it. The eye of God sees all this wickedness, and by the mouth of His servants He lifts His warning voice and utters the threat of doom.

Thus by Isaiah He says: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds

make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged." We find the prophet putting a song of triumph into the mouth of the Israelites in anticipation of the destruction of Babylon, beginning: "How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!" and ending thus: "And I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts." Yet again we find the prophet actually naming the man who was to destroy Babylon, and suggesting the method by which it should be done. "Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to *Cyrus*, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. . . . I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me." This was one hundred and fifty years before Cyrus was born! Thus it appears that Isaiah's predictions were specific, and not general. We might say of a city as wicked as Babylon, some judgment will overtake it; but the prophet was particular, and even gave the name of the agent and the exact method by which the city was to be destroyed! Jeremiah, a hundred years later, uttered similar predictions. "How is the

hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations? . . . And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts. . . . Thus saith the Lord of hosts: The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labor in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary." Daniel came still later, proclaiming the city's destruction on the very night in which Belshazzar was slain.

Thus we see the great, beautiful, and wicked city, and hear its sentence of doom. The crisis now has come. See! around those walls has assembled a mighty army, led by the man whom prophecy foretold. We pause a moment to ask "Who is this man?" History tells us he was the son of Cambyzes, king of Persia, and Mandane, daughter of Ahasuerus, king of the Medes. Cyrus, born B.C. 595, was educated with great care; at the age of twelve he was sent, with his mother, to the court of Media, and there treated with marked attention. At sixteen he distinguished himself in a war with the king of Babylon. At the court of Media was Darius, son of Ahasuerus, brother of Mandane, and uncle of Cyrus. His daughter Cyrus afterwards married, uniting the crowns of Media and Persia. Darius being still involved in war with the Babylonians, Cyrus was made general of the Persian troops, and united his forces with Darius against Babylon. Together they

captured the city and destroyed their enemies; Darius, as senior in authority, taking the kingdom, as stated in the text. The method by which the city was captured was truly wonderful. With their high and thick walls and brazen gates the Babylonians felt perfectly secure. The Persian army might try to scale the walls or penetrate them, but it would be in vain; Cyrus would only weary himself out, and must raise the siege. But what is that prophecy about opening the two-leaved gates and drying up the rivers? We shall see by and by.

Now we look to see what is passing within the city. The utmost confidence prevails there, and the people have not in the least ceased from their thoughtless and sinful pleasures. The king has even now assembled his courtiers about him, —princes, wives, and concubines; and from the sacred vessels that were taken from the temple at Jerusalem they are quaffing wine, and praising the gods of gold, silver, and brass, of iron, wood, and stone. A thousand lords are gathered there; the wine flows freely and the laugh runs high. But suddenly the king is seized with trembling, and his face turns deadly pale. He spies upon the wall a glaring handwriting that he cannot read, and yet that he reads too well. The voice of doom is there, and this fills him with a strange agony that makes his knees smite one against another, and his face turn pale. Then he cries aloud for the astrologers and soothsayers and wise men of Babylon. None can interpret till Daniel is brought, who reads the message and makes it plain: "*Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin!*" "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." How was this? What does the prophet mean? Look at Cyrus, and you shall see. He has simply watched his opportunity. He has heard of those midnight revelries, and he has thought of the possibility of a gate being left open as a consequence of confidence and inebriety. He must reach that gate; it is one of those in the inner wall, by the edge of the river. Accordingly, he turns the water of the river through a canal into the lake, and thus drains the channel, enabling the soldiers to march along the bed of the river into the city. It was a tremendous surprise and a complete victory. There was neither resistance nor time to resist; the prophet had scarce concluded his solemn utterance when the noisy banqueters were startled by the soldiers' presence, and in that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain.

From this time on, Babylon declined, and all that was written concerning her was literally fulfilled. Even the situation of all this grandeur was unknown, —the dust of centuries had buried it from view; and it is only within the last two centuries that her ruins have been discovered and her site has become known. Such was the end of that great city and kingdom, so terribly did God perform His word! Well might Isaiah cry, as with prophetic vision he saw the end: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" "Babylon is fallen, is fallen!"

Now let us learn some lessons.

1. *We see that grandeur and power cannot save a*

city or a kingdom. If these could, then Babylon would have stood to this day. It did not seem possible that a city of such proportions and defences, with its massive walls and brazen gates, with its costly material structures, — the tower of Belus, the palace, the hanging-gardens (one of the seven wonders of the world), — with its immense commerce and vast influence and power; the city that Nebuchadnezzar took so much pride in as he walked in his palace and said: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" — it did not seem that all this could be so utterly obliterated and destroyed.

No, it is not beauty, art, strength, wealth, magnificence, or greatness that preserves a city or a nation. Things that are costly and grand with men may be of no account with God. Moral worth, strength of principle, the beauty of holiness, God looks with more favor upon, than upon outward splendor, that seems only as a garniture to inward lust. The only true antiseptic influence in society is public virtue; and when this departs, putrefaction must soon follow. We are to set a right store, then, by that which is pure and good; we must practise that which is honest and excellent ourselves; and aim to diffuse through society correct principles, and build up in each soul a conscientious regard for all that is right, true, and good.

2. *We see that it is a fearful thing to fall into God's hands.* What a judgment did He send upon Babylon! God is infinitely holy and almighty. He will not tolerate wickedness, and though He may wait even after

He has uttered a city's doom, the blow will fall. No person, city, or community may hope to continue in a course of high-handed wickedness. "Be sure *your* sin will find you out." You must not think that God is slack because His judgments forbear. Over every transgressor there is the "burden" of woe. I would caution you, then, against all wrong-doing. You cannot hide where God's eye cannot see you or His hand reach you. Walls of adamant and gates of brass are as nothing when the cup is full. You may indulge in sinful mirth and forget your true condition, but suddenly a *mene, mene*, upon the wall shall bring pallor to your face and fill your frame with trembling. Do not, then, whosoever you are, keep on in sinful courses. Stop, before judgment overtakes you.

3. *The hand of Providence is to be seen here.* How literally did fact and prophecy agree! How singular that those canals and that lake should have been made just to answer Cyrus' purpose when he wished to destroy the city! How singular also that the gate should have been left open, and that Cyrus should enter in through it, just as had been predicted one hundred and fifty years before! None but a Divine Being could arrange and regulate such a scheme. So in all great events and in every little circumstance the Hand of God is present, if it is not to be seen. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." We are to distinguish between fatalism and providence. It did not tie Cyrus' hands because he was named and spoken of one hundred and fifty years before he was born. In some sense the life of every

individual is similarly known to God. We are obliged to think of God as sovereign and omniscient, or else He could not be God. We see Him evidencing His divine prescience. At the same time we are conscious of independence and freedom. We feel more pleasure in thinking that our lives are the unfolding of a divine plan, and that we are led by a Father's hand, than in considering ourselves the creatures of Fate, with a life that starts in darkness, is moved by chance, and comes to nought. We love to study the Bible for the evidence it furnishes of divine providence; we love to note an overruling Power in what is happening around us; and we love, with reference to individual history, to sing, —

“ In each event of life, how clear
Thy ruling hand I see ! ”

4. *We have presented here a striking instance of the power of conscience.* The guilty king is ready to see an omen of evil in the handwriting, though he cannot read it. He feels that there is a crisis near, and he quivers with alarm. What now is the hilarity of the moments gone, when the knell of doom is sounding ! Thus did God let in upon this guilty soul the torments of its own misdoing. “ It is not often,” says one, “ that God comes forth in this way to alarm the guilty ; but He has a thousand methods of doing it, and no one can be sure that in an instant He will not summon all the sins of his past life to remembrance. He *could* write our guilt in letters of light before us, — in the chamber where we sleep ; in the hall where we engage in revelry ; on the face of the sky at night : or He can

make it as plain to our minds *as if* it were thus written out. To Belshazzar in his palace, surrounded by his lords, He showed this; to us in society or solitude he can do the same thing. No sinner can have any security that he may not in a moment be overwhelmed with the conviction of his own depravity, and with dreadful apprehension of the wrath to come."

Now, dear friends, let us so live that we shall always have a conscience void of offence, and that when death shall come to us it shall bring us no alarm. Death is the king of terrors only to the man who is conscious of wrong-doing. Death will some time come. If we can hold on to our earthly possessions till the last moment, we must then give them up. If we live in a palace and wear a crown, we must still die. The things of earth, for which those of you who are still out of Christ are toiling, are not worth the thought and time that you bestow. It is all right to get an honest living; but with your getting, there is something else to win. You are immersed in cares; you are variously occupied; and if not taken up with feasting, you will ere long be as much surprised as was the Chaldean king in his midnight revelry. God is calling after you, saying: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." He appeals to you by His Spirit; He addresses you by His providences; He calls through the ministry and ordinances of His Church, and asks if you will not now secure the true riches. My friends, do not slight His call, and make your hearts yet harder under the special influences and entreaties of the Gospel. For the doomed city

and kingdom with its guilty ruler there was no redemption; but for you there is pardon, hope, and promise of blessedness. Will you avail yourself of the opportunities and privileges of this hour? Will you acknowledge your guiltiness, confess your ill-desert and utter helplessness, and by faith, repentance, and obedience make the Lord Jesus Christ your personal Saviour?

AFTER THE RAIN.

BE still, sad heart ! and cease repining ;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining ;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

VI.

AFTER THE RAIN.

Nor the clouds return after the rain. — ECCLES. xii. 2.

OLD age is referred to as an evil time. Youth are admonished to remember their Creator before the "evil days" come, — the days without pleasure, when the light is withdrawn, and "the clouds return after the rain." That is, when the faculties give way, infirmities multiply, and joyless, dismal days follow one another in rapid succession. But knowing how much there is that is sorrowful in life, we are at liberty to ascribe to it that which is here ascribed to a part of it. The dark days do not all come at the end of life; they are distributed along. There are alternations of light and cloud, of gladness and tears, till we come where clouds never gather, and tears never fall. So much of sorrow is there in this life that it is common to say, "Man was made to mourn." We speak of this world as a "vale of tears." David described his situation as one in which "tears were his meat day and night." And to make the contrast of heaven infinitely great, it is written, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Youth are wont to think of life as all sunshine; but they get not far on before they find that tears and darkness come to them. It is

the common experience in life's pilgrimage that we are ever stopping to dig graves. Again and again we leave behind us some precious form. But there are also graves of fortune, graves of hope and friendship, of trust and confidence, of desire and purpose, so that our course can be traced back to the cradle by the monuments that we have reared along the way. There is no day so bright but that a dark one, at no great distance, follows it; there is no storm so great but that you may be sure that the clouds will return after the rain. Indeed, we have come to look for these alternations. When it rains, we know the sun will shine; and when the sky is clear and all is bright, we know that the clouds will return and send down rain. There are spells of balmy weather and gentle breezes which the sailors call "weather breeders," which come as harbingers of the approaching storm. So in human lots the bright day, like the signal at the end of the train, seems to say, "Look out for the dark day that is to follow." We rejoice when the clouds withdraw, the fierce elements cease their raging, the sun pours abroad his cheering rays, and the birds in the branches begin to sing. But experience says: "Think not that this will always last; enjoy the glory while it is yours, but know that the clouds will return after the rain." We see and know that it is so, and hence we are wont to speak of life as an April day. It is a most fitting emblem, with its gleams of light, its sudden dashes, its fitful changes, its uncertain ways.

Perhaps we think that things might be better than they are; we deprecate these changes; we wish that there were not such breaking up of plans, such disap-

pointment of hopes, and that the clouds would not return after the rain. But there is One who knows what is best, and He is ordering all things for human good. Amid all the discords of Nature there is harmony; and so amid all the conflicting and disheartening providences there is a loving and wise design. Suppose the clouds should not return after the rain; suppose the sun should never cease his shining: how soon would all the fields of the earth wither, the springs dry up, every tree and plant and shrub withhold its gift, and every living thing die? Nature is a grand workshop, and all the elements are artisans uniting in labors for the service of man. He who presides over all, bids the waves to beat, the air to stir, the sun to shine, and the rain to fall in such way, time, and measure as shall bring all into perfect fellowship, and best promote the one purpose of good to man. So in providence God has us under culture, and the dark days are just as necessary as the days that shine. How strange that we do not learn from ourselves! When you pot flowers you do not put them out in the burning sun, you choose a rainy day, and set them where the showers reach them; and when you suspect that the heat is too strong, you throw a shade over the delicate blossom, or put it away in the dark. And yet, when God treats us so, we call the treatment cruel. He knows that prosperity would prove our ruin, and so He brings us under the cloud shadow; and then our soul drinks in divine grace, and grows with expansive vigor. Heights make us giddy, and so God brings us low; and then we turn to Him. Goodness should lead us to repentance, and it sometimes does; but oftener

adversity makes one feel his need, and throws him back on God as his only helper. God tries all methods. All rain drowns, and all sun withers; and hence God mingles, withholds, and apportions as suits Him. It is a pity that sin should have entered this world; and yet these sorrows may work for our highest joy. The tears that we shed may turn to pearls, while the gladness that we felt may have been a siren that was leading us away. We are not capable of judging rightly now; in eternity we may say: "Bless God that He took my all; for it made me find Him! Bless God that He stripped me of property, or thwarted my plans, or took husband or wife and broke up my home; for so I found the true riches, gained an immortal hope, and have come to the reunions of the eternal home!" And if salvation does not grow out of these losses, but some lesser good, even then we may not feel that sorrows are unwisely sent and have no value. After we have obtained a Christian hope, we still need discipline. The plant once up, must still be nurtured; the growth shall be most perfect, not when there has been simply sunshine, but as well a full supply of rain. And so the sweetest characters are commonly those who have seen the most sorrow. It is all very hard; but grace preponderates, love and meekness and piety grow, God is glorified, and every tear becomes the pledge and token of an infinite recompense in the world of joy.

Furthermore, sorrows by contrast make heaven more precious. If this world were all we wish it to be, we should not want another; if our earthly homes never knew sickness or death, we should have no desire to sing, "*Heaven* is my home." It is the lost

feeling, the absent feeling, the consciousness that we are away from our Father's house and from all that we love best, that makes us willing to leave this world, and "desire to depart," or "long to be there." Naturally we are glued to earth, and it is a detaching process that must be carried on. We must find the world so fickle and treacherous that we shall not trust it; we must experience so much of discomfort and hardship that we shall long for something better; we must have so many friends go and live on the other shore that we shall feel that we want our home where they are. So then as earth grows less in our esteem, heaven grows brighter; as these vain things attract us less, the nearer do we seem to come to the gates and streets and mansions of the eternal city. Our darkness here speaks of the light there; our broken links suggest the reunited chain; our falling tears tell us that above, the clouds never return after the rain. Ah! joyous time, when we come where the sun never sets, and the heart knows no pain. As one writes: —

“How sweet when, waning fast away,
The stars of this dim earth decay,
To hail, prophetic of the day,
The golden dawn above, my soul!
To feel we only sleep to rise
In sunnier lands and fairer skies,
And bind again our broken ties
In ever-living love, my soul!

“How sweet, when on this broken lyre
The melodies of time expire,
To feel it strung with chords of fire,
To praise th' Immortal One, my soul!

And while our farewell tears we pour
To those we leave on this cold shore,
To know that we shall weep no more,
Nor live in heaven alone, my soul."

We know so little of heaven that we have to describe it by negations. It is the place where sin and death and pain do not come, where love is never mocked, where hope is never disappointed, where companionship knows no end. The celestial city has no cemetery; no graves are opened there; no weeds of mourning are worn there; no groans or sighs are heard there; no tears are seen there; fear, weariness, and anxiety have no place there. In some sense heaven is just the opposite of all that earth is. So by the contrast we form guesses, and multiply the joy by thinking that that joy will have no end. Says one: "We have a little, just a little, to help our thoughts here. The exquisite luxury of respite from pain, of relief from anxiety, of rest, we do all know in a measure; but take the best of these moments and make them perfect and stamp them 'eternal,'—how changed, how 'new' they would be! For 'the clouds return after the rain' here, and we learn to rejoice with trembling,—afraid sometimes to think we are better; afraid to say we are at ease. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him."

Living as we do in a world of alternations, it is necessary that we adapt ourselves to our state. If the clouds return after the rain, then we ought to expect them to

return. We ought not to think when the sun shines that we are to see no more darkness in this world. In the fairest weather we should be prepared for the storm; we should have our roof tight when it does not rain, and then when it does rain we shall receive no harm. Men who think because the sun shines it will always shine, make a great mistake. There is a Bible caution: "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." It is not meant that we shall be all the while walking in the shadow of a cloud that is yet to arise, that we shall anticipate evil, or be unhappy because we know that trouble may come; it is simply meant that we shall not be too sanguine, too hopeful. In accordance with this thought are those other precepts: "Rejoice with trembling;" "Let your moderation be known;" "Live soberly in this world." The danger is that we shall not exercise this thoughtfulness and caution. A man prospers in business, and he becomes vain, lays out great plans, and forgets God; or he gathers around him loving hearts, and he thinks that health and happiness are always to be his. But in the moment of confidence the bolt falls from a clear sky. There are two psalms that stand in striking proximity. In one, the thirtieth, we find David rejoicing; and this is what he writes: "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved." We turn to the next psalm, and lo! he is in the depths; and this is his cry: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble. . . . My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing." That is the man who said in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved"! So it is; we

are saying, if not by words, in feeling and conduct, "I shall never be moved;" and then in a short time, and quite unlooked for, the morning comes, and we are in trouble. We must understand this, and not boast or be too confident. We must remember that the clouds return after the rain, and be prepared for the dark days as well as enjoy the sunny ones. To expect an evil is to be armed against it. To keep in mind life's changes is to make them less painful when they come. Some people cry out against God when sorrows come as if He had done them a great wrong, — when He is all the while showing them in the alternations of day and night, summer and winter, sunshine and rain, that this is a law of this life; when He is showing them also in the history of others that there are no exceptions to this law, which is universal, that changes must come.

There is another and counter duty of adaptation. If we must expect the clouds to return after the rain, we must also expect them to depart. If in the light we should anticipate darkness, in the darkness we should anticipate light. If we are not in prosperity to be puffed up, in adversity we are not to be cast down. When our sky is bright, we should keep in mind that by and by the clouds will return; but when the clouds are above us, and all is dark, we have no right to say, "The sun will never again shine." The most sanguine seem the most disconsolate when a change comes. How men will nurse their griefs, and refuse to be comforted, and beat their heads like naughty children upon the marble, and cry out the more! Should they not know that the darkest night never kept back the

incoming day? The wildest tempest, lashing sky and waves into mixed commotion, gives place to a smooth and peaceful mirror and an overarching vault of blue. Let the clouds return; when they have poured out their bountiful treasures and wrought in us the discipline of sorrow, mellowing the hard soil of our hearts, supplying the juices of a vigorous growth to each soul-plant, and softening all our nature for a better life, then light shall return, warm rays shall shine on us, and all our being shall unfold into fullest blossoming, sweetest fragrance, and largest gift of fruit. We say, then, to those on whom the rain is falling, Be of good cheer; the clouded sky and the rain-drops are sent in love; you may be drenched, but you will not be drowned; the loving Husbandman will see that you receive only such treatment as is best for you and as you need, enhancing your usefulness, deepening your experience, and bringing to you in the end the largest measure of joy.

My friends, our great need is to have an interest in Christ, to arm us against sorrow and to prepare us to die. Have you such an interest? Do you love, live for, and trust in Jesus? If you have Jesus for your friend, you need not mind the darkness of the night or the severity of the storm. If you have Him on board, He will rise from His sleeping pillow and say, "Peace, be still!" And when you come to meet death itself, you can descend into the dark valley without fear, knowing David's quietness, or triumphing like Paul. If you feel that the clouds return too often, and you are sad and weary, and would fain be gone, let me remind you that the rest is near. It is but a

little while, and you shall hear the Bridegroom's voice. Listen when the sky is bright; listen when it rains; be ever in an attitude of expectancy, and let these words express your mind:—

“So I am watching quietly
Every day.
Whenever the sun shines brightly,
I rise and say:
‘Surely it is the shining of His face!’
And look unto the gates of His high place
Beyond the sea;
For I know He is coming shortly
To summon me.

“And when a shadow falls across the window
Of my room,
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to watch the door and ask
If He is come;
And the angel answers sweetly
In my home:
‘Only a few more shadows,
And He will come.’”

THE MOUNTAINS.

THOU too, hoar mount ! with thy sky-pointing peaks,
Oft from whose feet the avalanche, unheard,
Shoots downward, glittering through the pure serene,
Into the depths of clouds that veil thy breast, —
Thou too, again, stupendous mountain ! thou,
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low
In adoration, upward from thy base
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,
Solemnly seemest, like a vapory cloud,
To rise before me, — rise, oh ever rise !

SAMUEL T. COLERIDGE.

VII.

THE MOUNTAINS.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. — PSALM cxxi. 1.

SOME scholars would place a period after the word “hills,” and make the remaining clause a question,—“From whence cometh my help?” “My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” I have recently returned from a visit to the White Hills of New Hampshire. During my stay there the words of this psalm kept coming to me. Ascending from summit to summit, passing beyond the reach of vegetation, looking down into valleys thousands of feet below, and seeing before and around me mountain piles of bleak and barren rocks, I thought of Him who heaped those gigantic masses, and was led to reflect, “Is it possible that the Being whose powerful handiwork I see can be my Father and my Friend? How strange that I, so feeble in comparison, should be thought more of than this immense display of creative power and skill! These rocks shall perish, but I am to live forever! The material universe is to be destroyed, but Christ died for me!”

It is well to seek the hills. Health and inspiration spring from change of air and change of scene. Besides, the mountains teach us moral lessons.

It is possible that we do not heed as we ought the voices of Nature. We live in the midst of panoramas that do not fix our eye, and amid sounds that do not engage our attention. Here are two volumes, Nature and Revelation, and but little do we know of either. It is said that there is no language where the voice of Nature is not heard; and yet to ears how dull is that language spoken! It speaks of God; but the heathen knew Him not, and upon us it makes but little impression. We read, "The heavens declare the glory of God," and we see the Psalmist gazing upward to consider the moon and the stars which God had ordained; but we too little follow his example, or stop to behold the evidence of Deity written in the leaves and flowers, the rocks and streams around us. We are going through the world ignorant of what it contains. We behold these beautiful objects and look out upon this lofty scenery; but our hearts are almost as little touched as if there were not within us an immortal soul. The eye of an irrational animal on a mountain look-out sees what some men see, and appreciates it almost as much. I remember a scholarly gentleman who always took his seat at the end of the last car, that he might see the country through which he was passing; and he considered it almost profane to read in the cars, when there was this book of Nature without, so much more inviting.

Let us to-day lift up our eyes unto the hills, and learn from them profitable lessons.

1. How much is said of *mountains in the Bible*,—thus putting honor upon them, and bringing them specially to the attention of men! We may not have

thought of it, but the Bible seems to abound with references to mountains. The Son of Man chose to be born in a hill country, — “the hill country of Judæa.” He who made the world, honored that as the spot in which, with reference to His humanity, He would be born and reared. Amid such scenery He passed His life. On the mountain He preached that sermon known as the Sermon on the Mount. To the retirement of mountains He withdrew, and there spent whole nights in prayer.

“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”

Mount Tabor was the scene of His transfiguration, and when His life-work was accomplished, on Mount Calvary He was crucified, and from Mount Olivet He ascended to His Father in heaven.

The country of the Jews, which God selected as the place where He would gather His people, was a hill country. From Ur of the Chaldees God brought Abram to Palestine, and established his descendants in the possession of that land. The conquest of Joshua is thus described: “So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same; even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baal-Gad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon.” The Syrians urged in explanation of their own defeat that the gods of Israel were gods of the hills. “Their gods,” they said, “are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us

fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they."

How many Bible scenes are associated with mountains! As it was a hill country in which God's people dwelt, it could not be otherwise. When the law was to be given, Moses was called into a mount, and so Sinai stands as the representative of that scene. Carmel we associate with the memorable event in the days of Elijah when the four hundred false prophets were confounded and the people convinced by the power of God there displayed. Moriah was the mount up which Abraham led Isaac as a willing sacrifice, and on which afterwards the temple was built, and the Lamb of God, as a greater sacrifice, was offered. Hor was the mount which Aaron ascended, on which he put off his priestly robes, and laid himself down to die. Nebo was the mount from which Moses surveyed the Promised Land, and then was hidden from the gaze of men, no one knowing his grave. There are other sacred mountains, — Gilead and Hermon, Ebal and Gerizim, Lebanon and Horeb and Seir, with all of which interesting events are connected.

What frequent references there are to mountains also in the way of figure! Mount Zion was the eminence on which the temple was placed, and so it came to be synonymous with the Church of God. The mountains round about Jerusalem were descriptive of God's encircling love. We say of the Church, "Walls of strength embrace thee round." And again and again the hills and mountains are referred to as illustrative of Scripture truth. "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by

righteousness." "The stone cut out of the mountain without hands" is to become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."

2. Mountains speak to us concerning *the being and character of God*. If Nature is a volume, this is a chapter that is particularly emphatic. All material things speak of the Creator, but mountains make the deep bass, or take the leading part, in the grand chorus; they tell us of the power of God. We associate strength with elevation and massiveness; and so we read, "The strength of the hills is His also." "Which by His strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power." Beholding those vast piles, the summits of which touch the skies, and which spread out on their broad foundations beyond the compass of vision, we cannot but associate with them almightiness. Where is the arm that could have lifted those masses of matter into their place, and built those monuments of greatness, but the arm of God? If men will deny creative power when they look at the starry worlds or contemplate Nature in its milder forms, how can they confront these solemn, mighty witnesses, and say there is no God?

Would we have some idea of continuance and of the endless life of God, the hills again utter a voice. Jacob refers to them on his dying bed to show the extent of blessings promised to his son Joseph, styling them "the everlasting hills;" and Habakkuk in

vision saw the Holy One, whom he thus describes: "He stood, and measured the earth: He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: His ways are everlasting." Moses writes: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." As descriptive also of God's righteousness, the mountains serve as a type. The psalmist writes: "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep."

Thus various divine attributes are suggested and represented by corresponding characteristics that the mountains exhibit. Sometimes there are grotesque appearances in Nature which seem as if they had been chiselled there by the hand of Art; and yet they are on so grand a scale as to awe and impress us the more with the creating hand of Deity. Starr King, in speaking of the famous Profile Mountain in the Franconia group, uses language something like this: "As tradesmen sometimes hang out huge emblems of their art to attract attention, — the hatter and boot-maker, for example, a hat or a boot, — so the great God has hung out in the skies the image of a man, a rocky face in outline, to last as long as the hills shall stand, to show that He makes men." God does make men; and, without fancies, everything that He has wrought testifies of His character and skill. And thus the beholders of Nature without the written word are

called into this temple of rock and mountain to recognize His presence and adore. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

3. Mountains impress us with *our own littleness*.

Since writing these words a friend has placed in my hands some original verses, which I here quote :

"Once more I look upon these mountain heights,
Firm set upon their strong, invisible piers ;
Once more I watch the swift and varying lights
As I have seen them in the other years, —

"The morning glow upon each wooded crest,
The mid-day glare beneath the August haze,
Or evening shadows when the golden West
Keeps as its own the day's departing rays.

"The same, yet not the same, they come and go,
These airy messengers so fair, so strange ;
Old as the sun, no touch of Time they show,
No loss of beauty in their ceaseless range.

"While the firm hills maintain their towering sweep,
Unharm'd by summer sun or winter rime,
Their primal force and splendor still they keep,
And age not with the passing years of Time.

"And I, — since first my eager footsteps sought
These circling hills and all that they enfold,
How has Time's subtle power upon me wrought, —
Ah ! I have learned that I am growing old.

"Not now the unwearied nerve of other days,
Not now the flush and strength of earlier years ;
Within, without, are changes and decays, —
The touch that withers, and the sky that sere.

“ A little while, and my dimmed eyes shall turn
From all that fills them here with calm delight,
And I with quickened vision shall discern
The Eternal Hills and their unfading Light.

“ So lessening days but bring immortal years,
And failing powers the life that is to be ;
So in the human the Divine appears,
So out of death comes Immortality.”

To climb the lofty height, to penetrate some dark ravine, or to gaze up at the sky from the depths of an immense cañon, make one feel that he is of small account. We are humbled before the stupendous forms that we see. It would seem that no dweller in the mountains could be proud,—that the very rocks would remind him of his littleness, and the lofty peaks would make him bow his head. It was a view of the physical heavens that led the Psalmist to say: “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?” Again he asks, “Lord, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him! Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away. Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.” It is not strange that one who had the gift of genius should write: —

“ Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned eternity in icy halls

Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche, — the thunderbolt of snow!
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gathers around these summits, or to show
How earth may pierce to heaven, yet leave vain man below."

4. Mountains strengthen and develop *manly qualities*. It is commonly admitted that the mountaineer possesses a frank and generous character. Men that breast the storms of winter and breathe the pure air of heaven usually develop a stronger frame. Living in a healthful atmosphere, and learning to cope with difficulties and endure hardness, they become muscular, stout, and strong. And as the mind sympathizes with the body, it takes on similar characteristics. Who were braver than the Green Mountain Boys of our Revolution? And when we look for hardy characters, generous, patriotic, fearless, and strong, where do we find them, if not among those who have been reared among highland slopes or mountain fastnesses? The Scotch have ever been a brave people; and has not their country had something to do with their bravery? It was a mercy that our fathers were guided to the rugged shores of New England, where by severe trials a manly character for themselves and their descendants was formed. Sunny skies, balmy breezes, and spontaneous growths are enfeebling. The prairies of the West are grand, but they seem to require the strength and enterprise of the East to give them real value; while the mines of the mountains are attracting new settlers, and it is possible that on those lofty slopes some of the hardiest and best portions of our population shall yet have their homes.

It is remarkable that the Bible has so little to say concerning plains. It tells of the plains of Sodom, where Lot chose to settle, rich in soil, but occupied by a depraved people, and given over to destruction. Plains, it would seem, are far less effective in creating and developing a strong and noble character. Says one: "The plains, all save a few barren deserts of sand, have yielded to the occupancy of human art. The hills, as in the old Scriptures they are called, are indeed everlasting. When we have left them, they cannot be forgotten or removed from our thought. As we still feel in our nerves the motion of the sea after we have planted our feet on the firm land, so the crests and hollows of the solid globe continue to make themselves felt in our mind. Transferred to the chambers of the imagination, they stand there, a mute material warning against all moral narrowness and bigotry. Liberty and law, magnanimity and humility, inflexible sincerity and inexhaustible bounty, are their lessons."

5. Mountains foster *patriotism*. Love of home and country is stronger in those who are reared among the mountains. None are so slow to emigrate as the Swiss, the Welsh, and the Highland Scotch. Particularly is this true of the Swiss, many of whom were known to die of homesickness while serving in the army of the First Napoleon. On the contrary, the dwellers in the Netherlands, or lowlands of Europe, have always been more ready to leave home and country. Who compose the wandering tribes of Asia but the occupants of deserts like the Bedouins of Arabia? Nor is it reasonable that local attach-

ments should be as strong where there are no grand objects to attract the eye. With level plains and open sky, a home is the same, wherever one wanders. But amid rugged scenes, new landscapes are constantly appearing, and new pleasures arising to the eye.

Moreover, those mountains stand as a lasting protest against all change. Fixed in their ancient seats, and resisting with their rocky sides the tooth of Time, they stand from age to age the same. Fit types are they of the Eternal! Learning from them not to change, and attracted by their grandeur and their beauty, is it strange that those to whose eye they are familiar should grieve to leave them, and that, returning, they should behold them with the tenderness and enthusiasm of old friends?

“He who first met the Highlands’ swelling blue
Will love each peak that shows a kindred hue,
Hail in each crag a friend’s familiar face,
And clasp the mountain in his mind’s embrace.”

How tenderly does one sing!

“My mountain home, my mountain home!
Though valleys fairer lie,
My spirit pines amid their bloom,—
It shuts me from the sky.
The mountains holier visions bring
Than e’er in vales arise,
As brightest sunshine bathes the wing
That’s nearest to the skies.”

These lessons of the mountains teach us to be thankful that the world is so grand and beautiful, so full of good, so well adapted to the wants and circumstances of man, and that our country is one where we

may behold some diversity in Nature, and, without going far, may lift up our eyes to hills that are famous in themselves, and that speak to us in this impressive manner. Fitly may we sing: —

“My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love ;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills ;
My heart with rapture thrills
Like that above.”

Then, further, we ought to adore God as the author of creation. Shall we live in this temple and behold its beauties, and never think of Him who designed and built it? Shall we admire the structure and glory in the possession, and not lift a devout or reverent thought to Him whose handiwork we see, and whose encircling Spirit breathes around us? If St. Paul's cathedral was the noblest monument to its great builder, and the reader at his tomb, for evidence of the architect's greatness, is directed to look around, shall not we, much more, in this greater temple, amid these lofty columns and stupendous arches, be impressed with His greatness whose hand laid the foundations of the earth and hung the drapery of the sky? Can we lift up our eyes and behold these monuments of His skill and power, and not bow down before Him and adore?

Again, shall we not crave the protection of this Great Being? “I will lift up mine eyes,” says the Psalmist, “unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made

heaven and earth." The thought that God made heaven and earth inspires confidence and hope. The hills speak of His power; and if the Being who piled them up is willing and ready to help us, how thankfully may we seek His protection, and how confidently may we rest in His love! Think of it! to have One for your protector whose hand bears up the pillars of the earth; to have One to befriend and shield you who loves you with a father's love, and is Himself almighty! Oh! since it is offered, can you fail of asking that all this power may be exerted to save and protect you? Or will you array it against yourself, — resist the omnipotent will, and go down into darkness and woe, calling on the mountains and rocks to fall on you and hide you from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb?

Finally, let us rejoice in Gospel grace. "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest: . . . but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Blessed Gospel, blessed Christ! Rock of Ages! We occupy a mount of privilege, and from this, if we are not deceived in our hopes, we are to be lifted to heights of glory! My friends, where do you stand? If you are Christ's, you are finding that "the hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets," and you are looking up to those higher hills from which the New Jerusalem is to come down, and around whose summits gather everlasting light and joy. Oh! if we are Christ's, we shall ere long be upon those heights, the clouds beneath, and ineffable glory shining around us.

Beautifully does one write : —

“ When the daily cares are ended,
And the long day draws to its close,
How oft to our tired spirits
Have the mountains brought repose !
How calm they look in the distance,
How peacefully they lie, —
Sloping down to the river,
Pointing up to the sky !

“ But above the mountain summits,
Beyond the starry sky,
Some time we shall pass to a country
In the light of God most High ;
We shall leave behind us the sorrows
That came with our passing years,
And the Hand that guided our earthly lives
Shall wipe away our tears.

“ We shall pass from our earthly mansions
To the fields of light above,
From the weakness of earth's affection
To the fulness of Jesus' love ;
And the feet so oft grown weary
That the earthly mountains trod,
Shall never grow weary or falter
On 'th' eternal hills of God.' ”

THE
PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

It is a common saying, "If a man does not know how to pray, let him go to sea, and that will teach him." It is not the multitude that prevails in armies, and much less in words. And then for the Pharisees, whom our Saviour represents as the very vilest of men and the greatest of cheats, we have them amusing the world with pretences of a more refined devotion, while their heart was at that time in their neighbor's coffers.

ROBERT SOUTH.

VIII.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. — LUKE xviii. 9-14.

JESUS was a word-painter. He spoke by parables, and every parable would make a picture. To use a modern expression, He taught by object-lessons. He did not represent virtue and vice in the abstract, but in the concrete. He did not treat of qualities, but He let us see qualities in a living form. Artists have endeavored to express to the eye, by brush or pencil, many of these divine sayings. I can conceive of no grander gallery than that which should thus group the parables of our Lord. Here we see the sower scattering his seed; here the returning prodigal; here the Good Samaritan; and so on. Now we

have before us the picture of the two men at prayer. It seems a reality. We go back to those times. We take our stand at the temple gate, and two persons enter to pray. One, we perceive, is a Pharisee. He has on his brow a frontlet, — which is a little square box a few inches wide, with four Scripture texts on it, fastened by strings on the middle of the forehead. He has on his left arm phylacteries, — which were little rolls or strips of parchment on which were written certain words of the law; these were wound around the arm, from the elbow to the middle finger. You note that this man's phylacteries are wider than common, as indicating that he is a very religious man. The fringe, too, of his outer garment is very long, to show that he has great respect for the law. You know Christ said, "They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments." Thus the dress shows the Pharisee; but you read it in his face. His bearing, his raised head, his self-righteous look, show to what class he belongs. If he dressed like the publican, you could see the Pharisee in the man's bearing. Men sometimes wear phylacteries when they do not think that they do. But here is the publican. There is nothing peculiar in his dress. Perhaps he has some badge upon him that indicates that he is one of those despised men that collect the taxes. He has an humble, serious, earnest look; he is coming as a penitent, to seek relief in prayer. He does not observe the Pharisee, though the Pharisee sees him, despises him, and would not have entered with him if he could have helped it. Thus there come through the temple gate Haughtiness and Humility,

Pride and Penitence. They stop not in the outer court of the Gentiles, for both are Jews, but come into the inner court, where the Jews commonly worshipped. Here they stand apart, as if not fit to worship side by side. The Pharisee wishes to get as far as possible from the publican, that he may not be defiled. The publican, from a great sense of unworthiness, shrinks, as if into a corner, stays back, and dares not come nearer to the holy place. We read, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself," or stood by himself, choosing a position apart; "and the publican standing afar off," — that is, as far as possible from the sanctuary, which contained the golden candlestick, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense, and which the Pharisee was self-righteous enough to come very near to.

Perhaps you never thought of it before, but if you look in your Bibles you will see that the word "Pharisee" is spelled with a large "P," and the word "publican" with a little "p," as if indicating how much bigger one felt than the other. The whole work of conversion may be said to consist in getting a man to consent to spell his piety with a little "p" instead of a big one.

Now they are going to pray. Hark! it is the Pharisee: "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Did you notice how loud he prayed, and how straight he stood? He wanted to tell all around how good he was, as well as to tell God. This is the man you saw the other day on the corner of the

streets praying, to be seen of men. He speaks very loud, and tells you all about himself; for he wants you to understand that he is very pious. Pray! That was no prayer! What did he pray for? It was one long boast. He did not ask God for anything; he did not confess guilt or dependence; he even claimed that he possessed goodness, and was entirely right. He set himself up as better than others; he had not their vices, and was a very religious man besides. When he began, it seemed as if he would end well. The prayer gave good promise, at least in the first few words, "God, I thank Thee;" but what followed, nullified and spoiled it. Note the arrogance of the man. He condemns others by the wholesale. He puts himself in the one scale, and the rest of men in the other, and rejoices that he is better than all. He says: "They are extortioners, unjust, adulterers; but I am not one of them." What is there to show that he is not, except his own assertion? And if he would weigh himself as God weighs men, — by desires, looks, and thoughts, — might he not see that, offending in one point, he was guilty of all? And did he not know that he belonged to a class whom, on account of their great wickedness, Jesus severely denounced? He has lost sight of the fact that there are two tables of the law, — that love to God cannot be substituted for duties to men, or duties to men for love to God. You cannot keep one table and neglect the other. Religious observances cannot take the place of gentleness, truthfulness, honesty, and fair dealing with men; nor uprightness with men take the place of piety and prayer with God. We have to read through the two tables

together,—four duties to God on one, six to men on the other. Or perhaps this Pharisee made the distinction, and intended to sweep the field in his prayer. He disposes of his duties to men by looking at others, and blessing God that he is not as bad as they. And now, under duties to God, he pleads : “I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” Was he not very pious? He even went beyond the letter of the law. That required but one annual fast,—on the great day of atonement; but he besides kept a private fast twice each week, on Monday and Thursday, according to the custom of that time. You remember Christ accused the Pharisees of fasting, to be seen of men. That is why this man fasted twice in a week; and now he is telling the public of it in his prayer. He also says: “I give tithes of all that I possess.” Here too he went beyond the letter of the law. He says: “Tithes of *all* that I possess.” The law required that only the increase of the fields, flocks, and herds should be tithed. It was not necessary to give a tenth of the property; only a tenth of the income was required. Perhaps it is the property that he meant. If so, he seems to speak in a way to recommend himself particularly to God. He says, “of *all* that I possess,” whether of property or income. And so he ends his prayer, soliloquizing on what a good man he is.

Now let us listen to the publican’s prayer. We can hardly hear him, he speaks so low. He stands,—for that was the common attitude of prayer,—but he will not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, and smites upon his breast, saying, “God be merciful to

me a sinner ! ” His manner is quiet, yet earnest. He does not wish to attract the attention of men, but he does wish to get the ear of God. One prays to the audience, and is satisfied if men hear ; the other prays to Him who alone can read the heart and answer the desires of the soul. You heard the prayer. Did you observe how short it was ? The prayer of the Pharisee was short for him ; he would have been glad to make it longer. Jesus said of such, “ Ye for a pretence make long prayers.” But the publican’s prayer was still shorter. It was simple, direct, earnest. He asked for what he wanted, and stopped. Necessity begets brevity. One word is sometimes enough : “ Help ! ” “ Help ! ” “ Fire ! ” “ Fire ! ” Peter when sinking in the water cried, “ Lord, save me, or I perish ! ” It was enough. The dying thief cried, “ Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom ! ” His prayer was answered. The prayer of the publican has come to be the prayer and motto of many a penitent soul since his day. The distinguished Hugo Grotius, of Holland, when dying, away from his home, was waited on by an unknown minister, who referred him to this parable and prayer of the publican. His response was, “ This publican am I ! ” Oh that some among you might even now say, “ This publican am I ! ” Nor is it necessary to offer a prayer so long. One word might suffice ; and if you could not speak, you might throw your whole soul even into a *look*. “ Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Nought was required of the Jews in the wilderness, dying from the bite of the fiery serpents, but a look. It is not the length of the prayer that avails, but the

heart that is in it. Let the eye turn towards the Saviour and rest lovingly on Him, and salvation is yours.

Notice, further, the spirit of this man. How *humble* he is! He is one to whom the promise relates: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." It was the Pharisee's pride that spoiled his prayer; it is pride that keeps most men from Christ now. Humility is the basal grace; it is at the beginning of the beatitudes. But some men offer the Pharisee's prayer, not the publican's. They say, "How good I am!" not, "Have mercy on me a sinner!" The self-righteous, pharisaic spirit is the common sin. But to come to God acceptably, we must say, "In my hands no price I bring." Concede that a man is very correct in his private life and very constant in religious observances; more is needed. He must see the estrangement of his soul from God, feel his unworthiness, and accept salvation as a free gift. You note that the publican confesses his sinfulness and pleads for mercy. "God be *merciful* to me a *sinner*." It is *pardon* he sues for, — pardon, not *justice*. We are told that "One morning a beautiful girl, fourteen years of age, presented herself alone at the gate of one of the palaces of France. It was when the First Napoleon was Consul. Her tears and woe moved the keeper, a kind-hearted man, to admit her. She found her way to the presence of Napoleon as he was passing through one of the apartments, accompanied by several of his ministers. In a delirium of emotion the child rushed to his feet and exclaimed, 'Pardon, Sire! pardon for my father!' 'And who is

your father?' said Napoleon kindly; 'who are you?' 'I am Miss Lajolia,' she replied; 'and my father is doomed to die.' 'Ah, Miss!' said Napoleon, 'but this is the second time in which your father has conspired against the State. I can do nothing for you.' 'Alas, Sire!' the poor child exclaimed, 'I know it; but the first time papa was innocent, and to-day I do not ask for justice, I implore pardon, pardon for him!' Napoleon's lips trembled, tears filled his eyes, and taking the little hand of the child in both of his, he tenderly pressed it, and said, 'Well, my child, yes. For your sake I will forgive your father.' That is the plea that we have to bring before God, — pardon, pardon; not justice, right, claim, — pardon, pardon. But the unrenewed man straightens himself up before God, and says: "I will not beg pardon; I must be saved on my merits; I will not call myself a sinner." But "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." We must come down, to go up; we must become as *little children*, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven.

It is astonishing that men are so reluctant to take the publican's position, when it is the surest way to God, and leads to the highest exaltation. The first requisite is a *sense of sin*. There must be consciousness of guilt before we ask for pardon; appreciation of danger before we cry for assistance. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. When we feel that we are lost, then help comes. We are to look at the answer to these prayers, and notice the use that Jesus made of the parable, to perceive that the grand requirement in the case of all is an humble, contrite, broken heart.

Hear what the Great Teacher says: "I tell you, this man" — the publican, whose prayer we have just heard — "went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

We seem to see the two men returning now from the place of prayer. The Pharisee retains the same hard and boastful look. Prayer has brought no peace to his soul; he carries in his heart a burden which outward observances cannot remove. He is trying to justify himself by the deeds of the law, and he finds that these are a galling and heavy yoke. The publican looks not so sad as when he entered the temple gate. He has received an answer, his sin is pardoned, and he is going home with a light heart. He heard, and he has accepted that invitation: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." So he finds it; and you see the joy of pardoned sin, of acceptance with God, of a saving hope speaking in his countenance and glowing in his eyes. "I tell you," says Jesus, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The prayer of the publican is an epitome of the Gospel. It is spoken of, to use theological terms, as "a compendium of theology, hamartology, soteriology, and a striking proof that repentance and faith

are inseparable from one another." That is, analyzing the prayer, it directs us to God; it also speaks of sin and of redemption. It is a prayer. It proclaims our relations to God. It declares that He is merciful and that we are sinful. It brings the soul before its Maker in the true attitude, and recognizes that forgiveness is an act of sovereign mercy. "By grace are ye saved through faith."

We are to learn from this parable that self-abasement is the great prerequisite to conversion, to pardon and justification. A self-righteous spirit is displeasing to God, is a bar to His favor, and a hindrance to salvation. A man may be orthodox in his belief; may admit all that is contained in the articles of a Church; may be able to defend the doctrines of his Church; may have a strong and capacious mind, — and yet orthodoxy will not save him. He may be a great stickler for the ritual; may tithe all manner of herbs, as well as the fruit of the fields, — mint, anise, and cummin; may keep fasts, say prayers, adore the Church, and even "build synagogues," — and yet love of the Church will not save him. He may be a good moral man, reliable in business, kind in his family, a pillar in society, — honored, loved, praised by all; and yet goodness, integrity, and high standing will not save him. If these will, then where is there place for Christ? What will save him? The spirit and prayer of the publican, or Christ in answer to that prayer. Let him lay down orthodoxy, Church observances, and outward morality, and offer no plea but this, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and he will get peace, and be a saved man.

Oh, how simple is this matter of salvation! How easy it is to go down to our houses justified, now that we see the way! In a certain parish was an intelligent gentleman who held an office under the State. He was a constant attendant at church, had a pious wife, had been religiously brought up, and ever manifested an outward respect for religion. In a time of religious interest he was present at every evening meeting. Still he held back; and whenever an opportunity was given to those who wished to be prayed for to rise, he would never rise. He was a man of few words, and to anything that was said to him he would make but a brief reply. The meetings had been held for some time, quite a number had expressed hope, many were anxious and asking to be prayed for; but he never would rise. At length, at the close of a solemn meeting, the request was made that all persons in the house, professors of religion, and all who wished to be prayed for in the prayer to be offered, should rise. This man kept his seat: it was God's method of piercing his heart. The prayer by accident — was it not God's Spirit so directing? — said, "We pray for those who are standing, not for those who are sitting," — suggested, perhaps, by Christ's prayer, "I pray not for the world," and justified by it. The benediction was pronounced, and the meeting closed. This man walked in silence by the side of his wife to his home. She went to her room and prayed for him, leaving him with his Bible alone. At length he came to her and said, "Wife, I feel that I have done wrong; I do want to be prayed for." He saw and felt that by his act he had shut himself out

from the prayers of God's people. He was in great distress, but retired. He could not sleep, and hence arose, and spent the whole night in reading his Bible and pleading for mercy. In the early morning there was a ring at the pastor's door. It was announced that this gentleman had called, and that something dreadful must have happened. When the pastor entered the room, the caller, taking him by the hand, said, "I do want to be prayed for; I did not mean to be left out last night." A conversation followed. The pastor found that the caller was ready to give up all for Christ; and when asked to pray, he knelt right there and prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" That was all, he said no more; but the burden seemed lifted from his soul. Like the publican he seemed to come, and like the publican he seemed to go. That night he confessed Christ in the meeting. The next Sabbath he showed himself in the Sabbath-school, where he said he had not been for many years. At his request the hymn, "I was a wandering sheep," was sung. At the next communion he united with the church, and soon became one of its most useful and influential members. You are not to expect to be converted as this man was, or to obtain a Christian hope as he did; but you must have that spirit which shall lead you to become a praying man, and to pray, not with boasting, but contrition; not like the proud Pharisee, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are!" but like the penitent publican, — "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT.

PERHAPS some of the Puritan fathers may have gone too far, and have given too great a prominence to the terrors of the Lord in their ministry; but the age in which we live has sought to forget those terrors altogether; and if we dare to tell men that God will punish them for their sins, it is charged upon us that we want to bully them into religion; and if we faithfully and honestly tell our hearers that sin must bring after it certain destruction, it is said that we are attempting to frighten them into goodness.

CHARLES H. SPURGEON.

IX.

YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT.

Be sure your sin will find you out. — NUMBERS xxxii. 23.

WHAT Moses said to the children of Reuben and Gad is in some sense addressed to the human family. We seem to be living in a carnival of crime; the world is very wicked. Stupendous defalcations follow one another in rapid succession; we know not what to look for next; and men are losing confidence in one another. We are told that a bank president after a noted robbery said: "I'm sick of this rascally world. Don't want to see or do business with anybody. I'd rather be an old farmer living on a cross-road four miles from everybody, than have anything to do with banks, money, or men."

The text lifts a voice of warning. It asserts the general truth that all wrong-doing is reactionary; it "*finds out*" the transgressor, and sometimes it finds him out with terrible effect.

1. This is true *physically*. No natural law may be broken with impunity. Nature is very exacting, and will have its "pound of flesh." It is impossible to abuse the body and not, sooner or later, suffer the consequences. The penalties of natural law are as certain as fate. The gourmand may find a present

pleasure in glutting his appetite, but by and by disease and dreadful suffering will settle in his frame. "*Pay-day is sure to come!*" The inebriate may delight in the intoxicating cup, but it will lead him to poverty, wretchedness, and a drunkard's grave. Sensual indulgence may attract with promises of secrecy and delight, but over a flowery path it leads to infamy, degradation, and ruin. It is a common remark that the sins of youth bear fruit in old age. But great sins do not wait for old age; they make a man prematurely old, and send him to an early grave. Thus does Nature assert that there is a limit to the use of our powers.

Nor may we transgress in ways that are counted honest and reputable. All undue exertions of strength are sure to have their reaction. Athletic games may be harmful, and late hours, with many social customs, serve to undermine the physical frame. Student life is sometimes envied, and devotion to science regarded as a justifiable passion; but inordinate fires, as in the case of Kirke White, consume the delicate structure in which they are kindled. All over-work is harmful, whether in the store or office, in the kitchen or on the farm. In cities particularly we have examples of the infringement of natural laws, and of the punishment that is sure to follow. Not only among the lower classes, but also in the higher walks, these examples are seen. In the methods of business fearful draughts are made upon the strength and time. There are few men who are not tempted to over-exertion; and the sudden breaking down of one and another, as seen in paralysis, insanity, brain-disease, and premature age, asserts the law and proclaims a warning. It is base to

be a glutton, a drunkard, or a debauchee; but our bodies ought not to receive any unnecessary strain, either from work, study, society, or business. These bodies are, or should be, temples of the Holy Ghost; and we are put in charge of them, not to abuse, but to preserve and keep them for the honor and service of God.

2. Sin finds out the evil-doer by the *power of conscience*. As in the physical frame there are instincts that warn of danger; as we cannot come near the fire, for example, without the sense of heat or burning,—so in our moral constitution there are painful excitements as we come near to or engage in wrong-doing. Every human being is possessed of a *moral sense*; and this moral sense torments a man when he goes astray. It may even reveal the crime that he had thought concealed. To one it gives troubled dreams, and in the mutterings of the night perhaps discloses a deed of blood. Another it fills with remorse and shame, and tortures to confession, or perhaps to a fourfold restitution. We meet with cases of “conscience money,”—money that conscience makes a man disgorge. Another it haunts with terror, and drives to suicide. It is said, “Murder will out,”—better as in the text, “Sin will out.” The words of Daniel Webster are often quoted: “The guilty soul cannot keep its own secret. It is false to itself; or rather it feels an irresistible impulse to be true to itself. It labors under its guilty possession, and knows not what to do with it. The human heart was not made for the residence of such an inhabitant. It finds itself preyed on by a torment which it does not acknowledge to God or man. A vulture is devouring it, and it can ask no sympathy or assistance

either from heaven or earth. The secret he possesses soon comes to possess him; and, like the evil spirits of which we read, it overcomes him, and leads him whithersoever it will. He feels it beating at his heart, rising to his throat, and demanding disclosure. He thinks the whole world sees it in his face, reads it in his eyes, and almost hears its workings in the very silence of his thoughts. It has become his master. It betrays his discretion, it breaks down his courage, it conquers his prudence. When suspicions from without begin to embarrass him, and the net of circumstance to entangle him, the fatal secret struggles with still greater violence to burst forth. It must be confessed, it will be confessed; there is no refuge from confession but suicide, and suicide is confession."

Nor if the heart be hard, and the sensibilities torpid, is conscience therefore dead. Many are the instances where this slumbering power, like a smouldering fire, has burst forth into new flames. Take the case of Joseph's brethren. They had sold him into slavery, and counted him as dead. But when in famishing need they went down into Egypt, and troubles thickened and hemmed them in, then, though it was twenty years after, "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Thus did sin find them out after so long a time! Nor can we conceive of a more tormenting hell than conscience will enkindle in men's souls. It is not necessary that there should be literal flames; the soul let loose on itself is more tormenting than physical fire.

3. Sin finds out the wrong-doer in the *providence of God*. God does not suffer wicked men to escape. Even in this life they are likely to be exposed and punished. There are watchers and whisperers, as if around them God's detectives proclaim their guilt, and say, "This is the man!" Even when they think they have found a place of security, God lays His hand upon it and pulls it down. Says the wise man: "Evil pursueth sinners." It runs after them; they are like a hare hunted by the hound. What frequent instances of avenging justice we have in the Bible! When guilty Cain turned from his deed of blood, what fear and astonishment must have seized him as he heard that Voice calling after him, "What hast thou done?" The sin of Achan found out the perpetrator of it in a singular manner and with terrible results. At the taking of Jericho he stole a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold. Though he covered these up in the earth under his tent, yet he could not cover up his crime. It was charged to Israel, hindered them in the taking of Ai, and was at length disclosed by lot. "And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had. . . . And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire."

The story of Abimelech reveals another instance of avenging justice. He had slain his seventy brethren, and usurped kingly power; but note the history: "When Abimelech had reigned three years over

Israel, then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech." A conspiracy arose; Abimelech assailed the tower of Thebez; a woman from the top cast a piece of millstone upon his head, breaking the skull. Then he called to his armor-bearer and said, "Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died. . . . Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren." The story of Ahab and Jezebel furnishes a like illustration (1 Kings xxi. 19-23).

So of Amalek. If judgments are not swift, they are sure. In Exodus xvii. 14 we read: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." Amalek had fought with Israel in Rephidim. It was when Joshua commanded the army, and Moses prayed upon the hill-top, his two arms being sustained by Aaron and Hur. Amalek was discomfited; and this is the fearful decree of extermination and extinction that the Lord directs Moses to write and preserve in a book. We follow down the track of history, and look for the fulfilment of this decree one hundred, two hundred, three hundred, four hundred years; but Amalek is still alive. And now we turn to 1 Samuel xv. 3, and read: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Thus a sentence pro-

nounced in the days of Moses was executed in the time of Samuel, — more than four hundred years after. The Almighty seems sometimes to *hold* the arrow upon the string in the bow, and then lets it fly.

Nor are illustrations of this kind found only in the Bible. The Goddess of Retribution lives for aye, holds her court in every age, and summons to her bar all gross transgressors. Darkness and death cannot hide guilt; even the grave reveals secrets, and dead men do sometimes tell tales. When the hand of the Almighty searches after a man, he cannot flee.

I know an instance where a grave disclosed a crime. It was many years ago. A man of wealth died, and the family employed a jeweller to prepare a plate for the coffin. They wished the plate to be of solid silver, and furnished the jeweller sixteen English crowns — in value about twenty dollars — of which to construct the plate. They also paid him three dollars for his services. The funeral was held and the man was buried. Many years after, the descendants of the deceased man, wishing to have the dead of their family buried together, caused his remains to be taken up and laid in a new plat in the cemetery. On opening the grave, it was found that the jeweller had defrauded the family, furnishing a copper plate instead of a silver one. He thought, no doubt, that his evil deed would be buried with the dead; but after he was himself dead, thus did Providence bring his iniquity to light.

4. Sin will find out the evil-doer *at the judgment*. If not before, it will find him out then. If he go all his life unpunished, flourishing like a green bay-tree, drinking of stolen waters, and uninterrupted in a single

course of crime, the day of retribution will nevertheless come. The present is not a complete system of rewards and punishments; the final adjustment is to come. God may give to some men a long tether, but He will no less certainly draw them in. Common-sense, as well as the Bible, teaches that there must be a day of future recompense. Reason is too consistent with herself to believe that good and bad shall come out alike in the other world. Even Universalists have abandoned their old ground, and now hold to the doctrine of restoration; that is, that after some punishment in the future, men will be raised to a state of purity and happiness. A Universalist writer says: "Some excellent brethren, — men in the pulpit, and men out of it, — adopting a new and current political phrase, are urging our people, in this dawn of the second century of our Church, to take a new departure; to discard, it would almost seem, some of the theological positions we have hitherto maintained, and place our denomination, before the world, at least, upon other and different grounds. In some quarters it has been intimated that we must especially repudiate the dogma that sin is born of the body or perishes with it, and the connected position that there is no future punishment for present sin, and no moral connection between this life and the life to come. The implication would appear to be that we must come out squarely, and preach future punishment, not only to take away our reproach, but to give our gospel moral power, and turn men from sin to righteousness of life." Thus even Universalists are coming to see the necessity for a judgment to come. I say, then, sin will find out the

evil-doer at the last assize, if not before. You may be indulging in sin now, thinking to conceal and enjoy it; but it should startle you when your ear hears, or your eye lights upon, such passages as these: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." "For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad." "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Now let us make this subject practical, and apply it as deterring from the commission of sin. Whatever wrong-doing you are practising, let the words ring out around you: "Be sure your sin will find you out!" In every unfair advantage you take of another, in every evil purpose, in every impure thought, in every passionate or vile utterance, in every lustful suggestion from filthy books or obscene pictures, in every indulgence of a disordered appetite, do not forget, "Your sin will find you out!" In trade and traffic, on 'change, in store and office, whenever you are tempted to take undue advantage of ignorance or weakness, read these words! Over the door of the saloon where the intoxicating cup is mingled, read these words! On the walls of the house of sin, where none but the fool enters, read these words! The very thought that God's omniscient eye is on you should restrain you from every path of evil. How do you know but that the slightest circumstance shall be made to betray your guilt, to be followed by degradation, remorse, and ruin? How do you know but that in some startling

manner God will arrest you in the very act of crime? His detectives are on the alert. The Hand that controls all forces and sustains all things may touch some spring that shall suddenly entrap you. A young man belonging to one of the most respectable families in Connecticut having fallen into unsteady habits, was suspected of crimes against the State. He was once under arrest for passing counterfeit money, but forfeited his bonds and escaped. We are told that "on a Sunday night he broke into a store in the village, where he had once been a clerk, and brought out various articles of merchandise, which he placed in an empty wagon that he had stolen and drawn to the door. Having filled the wagon, he went to a stable and attempted to lead out a valuable horse belonging to the man from whom he had stolen the goods, intending to harness it to the wagon and make off with his booty in the stillness of the night. Just at that moment when he thought no eye could see and no ear hear, the bell from the village church tower sounded out an alarm loud and clear, startling the inhabitants from their slumbers and hurrying them into the streets. They took it to be an alarm of fire. Rushing out, they discovered the robbery and caught the thief before he had time to escape. But who rang that bell? That was the mystery. Upon inquiry it was ascertained that the sexton, in ringing the bell for the church service the day before, had by a seeming accident so turned it up and set it that he could not pull it down with the rope; and not having a key to the belfry, he was obliged to let the bell remain in that position. Just in time to detect that youthful criminal, it came down without

human help, and sounded that midnight alarm. After the arrest of the young man goods were found in his possession that had been taken from a store in another village, and he confessed that with the aid of an accomplice he had also broken into it and stolen several hundred dollars' worth of merchandise. Thus the ringing of that bell without human hands brought several criminal offences to light, and arrested the offender in his dishonest career." Do you beware lest, falling into temptation and yielding thereto, some bell of providence proclaim your sin and shame.

The text teaches us the importance of looking into our hearts and examining ourselves, that we may overcome the first approaches of evil, — as Matthew Henry expresses it, "To find our sins out, that we may repent of and forsake them, lest they find us out, as they certainly will, to our ruin and confusion." It is impossible that any of us should know how sinful we are. With man we may stand well; but how do we stand in the sight of a pure and holy God? There are sins of omission as well as of commission. There are duties not done that may weigh upon our soul. Oh, this dead body of sin! How shall we escape from it? Is there a way of relief? "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." My friends, I point you to the Saviour as the world's great remedy for sin. Sin is devilish, destructive, and must be punished; but Jesus died to rescue us from its guilt and power. Look to Him, then, and live; lay your sins on Him, and He will give you back Himself and everlasting joy.

SAUL MADE KING.

THERE used to be a children's book which bore the fascinating title of "The Chance World." It described a world in which everything happened by chance. The sun might rise or it might not; or it might appear at any hour, or the moon might come up instead. For every day antecedent and consequent varied, and gravitation and everything else changed from hour to hour. In this chance world, cause and effect were abolished; law was annihilated; and the result to the inhabitants of such a world could only be that reason would be impossible.

HENRY DRUMMOND.

X.

SAUL MADE KING.

Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over My people Israel. — 1 SAM. ix. 15, 16.

FOR hundreds of years after Moses, the Israelites were governed by judges. Samuel was the last judge. The time had come when the people desired a king. The elders presented themselves before Samuel, and said, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations." The circumstances under which their request was granted are full of interest. In Gibeah of Benjamin, about six miles from Jerusalem, lived a herdsman by the name of Kish. He is spoken of as a man of "power," or substance. This man had a son, who in respect to features and form was without an equal. But this son had attained to man's estate wholly unconscious of the destiny that awaited him. He may have known of the wish of the people to have a king, but he little dreamed that he was to be that king. It is not probable that the range of his ambition extended beyond the limits of his father's farm.

Let us glance at the history.

The asses of Kish, Saul's father, had strayed, and Saul, in company with a servant, was sent to find them. For three days they travelled over miles of country in a fruitless search. At length, coming to the land of Zuph, Saul despaired, and said, "Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us." The servant suggested that there was not far away a prophet, or seer, who could show them the way. Saul objected that they had nothing to give the man of God. The servant replied, "I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver;" and with this they went to Ramah. Young maidens met them at the public well, and told them where they should find the prophet. As they went, Samuel met them, and the Lord said to Samuel, "Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over My people." So confidently had Samuel expected Saul that he had assembled a company of about thirty persons; "and he brought Saul and his servant into the parlor, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden." He had even caused a shoulder of meat to be cooked for the occasion, and a portion reserved for his distinguished guest, saying, "Unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people." After a season of communing, Samuel accompanied Saul abroad. It was about "the spring of the day." "And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God. Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed

him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance?" Can we imagine the astonishment that must have possessed Saul? He sought for asses, and he lighted on a crown!

1. The history impresses us with the fact of an *overruling Providence*. To the sceptic these circumstances were the work of chance. It happened that the asses strayed, and could not be found, and that Saul was directed to Samuel. But the text declares that the Lord told Samuel a day in advance that this man was coming. "Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over My people Israel." Observe: "I will send." How little Saul knew that a Higher Power was urging him on!

It is plain, then, that chance had nothing to do with Saul's fortune. Those animals strayed not of their own motion. A divine influence impelled them. They wandered not into places of their own choosing; for then they might have been found, and Saul would have returned to his father. It was not chance that led that particular servant to accompany Saul, for it was by him that Saul was directed to Samuel. It was not chance that kept them wandering for three days in a fruitless search; for the exact time was fixed when they should meet Samuel. It was not chance that led the servant to think of the seer who could show them the way. And when the question of their going turned on the point of their having any-

thing to give the man of God, it was not chance that provided for the need and disclosed to the servant the fourth part of a shekel of silver in his possession. Nor was it chance that guided their feet aright, till they actually stood before the man of God, and the great crowning end of their mission was accomplished. I say we see running through this whole transaction a remarkable providence. See Saul ready to abandon the search. Hear him saying, "Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us." But how impossible thus to frustrate the plan of God! Little thought he that an Omnipotent Will was moving him onward!

But while the Lord is thus influencing Saul, we see Him, on the other hand, revealing His purpose to Samuel. He tells him that Saul is to come, and mentions the hour of his coming. And so confidently does Samuel expect Saul that he assembles a company and has a feast provided against his arrival!

Thus do all the parts of God's providence work together. Wheel fits wheel, and throughout the great system harmony prevails. The Divine government receives no jar; no purpose of God fails of fulfilment.

My friends, "There is a Divinity that shapes our ends." It was God who raised up Saul from his humble position and made him to sit upon a throne, wielding a royal sceptre. And it is God who appoints to all men their time and place. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up

the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." Every man's life is a plan of God. We do not understand how it is; but the fact we are compelled to recognize. Somehow we are influenced and controlled; and yet we know that we are perfectly free. We cannot charge our wrongdoing upon God. Nor will Society accept the excuse that the criminal could not do otherwise. The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God did not mitigate the unequalled crime of Judas; nor did it occur to Judas that he could offer this plea, for had it occurred to him, he would not have gone and hanged himself. Not only does God's word assert His sovereignty, but individual and national history likewise assert it. Almost every person is conscious of an Overruling Power. Matthew Henry remarks: "He that will observe providences, shall have providences to observe." It is with an honest conviction that we sing,

" In each event of life how clear
Thy ruling hand I see !"

The history of the Jews abounds particularly with instances of God's interposing hand. It is vain, then, for men or nations to think that they can go counter to the will of the Most High. Our purposes will be powerless if not in harmony with God's designs; our strength will be weakness if not energized by His quickening Spirit. "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps."

2. We cannot but notice, again, *how minute and particular are God's providences!* There are men who

seem to think that God does not concern Himself with the little affairs of this world. They will allow to Him creation and providence, but they think of Him as standing aloof from the things that He has made. Having created worlds and established laws, He looks on, and does not trouble Himself with little operations and methods. It seems belittling that the Author of the Universe should take cognizance of trifles and details. But the fact remains that God does concern Himself with the smallest things as well as the greatest. He sets a world whirling on its axis and round its orbit, and then comes down to the humblest insect in that world, and ministers to it life and food and happiness.

The case of Saul furnishes many details. All the circumstances of the errand — the speaking in the ear of Samuel; the naming of the time; the announcement of the man; and other incidents — prove how careful God was in arranging and evolving all the parts of His plan. Aside from observation, we have the words of the Great Teacher: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." It is not as a distant Deity that we would think of God. We would not resolve the Divine government into the operation of natural laws. We would see the hand of God in everything, — writing out the history of worlds and of insects, prescribing laws to the universe and to individuals. We would feel that there is by our side an ever-present Deity, marking out for us each step that we take, and supplying to us each breath that we

draw. We would hear the voice of God in the rippling stream as well as in the dashing cataract or the roaring thunder. We would see His beauties painted in the tiny flower as well as in the glories of the sunset. We would catch glimpses of His brightness from the glare of the insect's wing as well as from the gleam of the lightning.

Any other view is dishonoring to God. How shorn of His divine attributes does it make God appear to suppose that He can not or will not concern Himself with the little things as well as the great! Where then is His omniscience? Where His omnipresence? If He sees and knows all things, He must see and know the little things. And if He is present everywhere, He must be present in trifling occurrences as well as in those that are momentous. And how can He be a just God, if He does not notice little sins; or how can He be a benevolent God, if He does not observe the little griefs and wants of His creatures?

This view of a special providence draws our hearts lovingly to God. If we think of God as far from us, acting only through great and universal laws, seldom, if ever, coming near, speaking to, or touching us, we shall feel but little interest in or affection for Him. But if we believe that He is as much concerned about us as though there were no other beings in existence; that He is watching over us with a father's love and tenderness, now leading us by the hand in ways of pleasantness, speaking words of cheer, wiping tears from our eyes, folding us to His bosom, and blessing us in many ways, — we are ready to call Him Father, and cannot but love Him with a filial, grateful, cordial love.

3. We are impressed, again, with *the mysteries of providence*. Life is full of surprises; the unexpected is ever happening. Nothing could have been farther from the mind of Saul than that he was to become a king. There was nothing, apparently, in his circumstances to warrant such an expectation. Hear him objecting, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" Besides, a divine decree seemed to stand in his way. The title of royalty belonged to the tribe of Judah, and it was in that tribe that Shiloh was to appear. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." What folly then for one of another tribe to think of securing that sceptre; and how many ambitious youths of the tribe of Judah might reasonably have sought the sovereignty! But God's hand was upon Saul, and king he was to be, though it were necessary that in the subsequent reign the sceptre should pass to the son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah.

Then, further, by what strange means did God reveal His purpose! He did not send a commission to notify the new king of his appointment. He did not submit the matter to the people till after Saul was anointed. He did not acquaint Saul with His purpose beforehand, and have him preparing for the high position. He did not single out the family and distinguish them as having in their keeping the future king of Israel. His ways were all unlike man's ways. And so it ever is; we sing truly: —

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform."

No doubt God often sees that the best preparation a man can have for some particular office is to be made by keeping him uninformed with respect to it. God trains him in the school of poverty and of hard toil, and develops such a character as could not be developed in any other way; and when He has made the man what He wishes him to be, sets him in his appointed place. Thus He raises up better men and accomplishes more glorious purposes. Sometimes men are disposed to plan for the Almighty, to reason as to His movements, and to say what He will do. But He disappoints their predictions, thwarts their expectations, and proves Himself an independent, wonder-working Being. His language is: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."

4. Once more, we are impressed with *the greatness of little things!* What apparently could have been more trivial than the straying of those asses? Yet this was the first link in a chain of providences that raised Saul from a herdsman to a king! The straying, possibly, was due to the carelessness of a servant in leaving down some bar, or not sufficiently protecting the inclosure. Yet see what that carelessness led to! Thus it is the world over. Things that we call little are sometimes great in the mind of God. History abounds with instances of great results springing from slight causes. It was the greater love that Jacob bore to

Joseph above his other sons that paved the way to all that followed of Jewish history. This parental weakness led Joseph's brethren to envy him; this led them to sell him into bondage; this carried him into Egypt; this brought him to the notice of Pharaoh; this resulted in his elevation to a high office; this enabled him to provide for his father's family during the famine; this brought them into Egypt. Here they remained, and in two hundred and fifteen years their descendants became a great nation. Then occurred the exodus under Moses, the march through the wilderness, the crossing of the Jordan, and their establishment in the promised land. It is common to speak of Rome as saved by the cackling of geese. We are told also that the life of Mohammed was saved by the weaving of a spider's web. Fleeing from Mecca, he took refuge in a cave. For three days he was secreted. The men who sought his life came to the cave, but seeing the web across the mouth of it, did not enter. Thus Mohammed was spared, to found a false religion, which now numbers more than two hundred million adherents. History informs us that when Columbus was nearing the western continent, a flock of birds passed above the masthead in a southwesterly direction. This was taken as an omen; the vessel was turned in the same direction, and hence the course of Spanish discovery was diverted from the northern half of this continent. The adoption of the thistle as the national emblem of Scotland is thus explained. "One time the Danes invaded Scotland, and they prepared to make a night attack on a sleeping garrison. So they crept along barefooted, as still as possible,

until they were almost on the spot. Just at that moment a barefooted soldier stepped on a great thistle, and the hurt made him utter a sharp, shrill cry of pain. The sound awoke the sleepers, and each man sprang to his arms. They fought with great bravery, and the invaders were driven back with much loss." Thus a thistle saved a nation.

Now, when we look at little things in such a light, how great do they appear! — great, because we see the use that God makes of them in the accomplishment of His purposes. Doubtless there are crises in our own lives, of which we take no notice; but when all things are revealed, we shall see that our weal or woe often hinged on some slight thing. Then it will appear that little things have had much to do with the world's history. Trifling occurrences, which men have overlooked, will then appear to have been the great bars and levers in the machinery of God's operations. Little incidents, which men have thought insignificant, will then strike all eyes as the great pillars in the frame-work of God's omnipotent rule. As one writes: —

"There is nothing in the earth so small that it may not produce great things,

And no swerving from a right line that may not lead eternally astray.

A landmark tree was once a seed; and the dust in the balance maketh a difference.

The dangerous bar in the harbor's mouth is only grains of sand;
And the shoal that hath wrecked a navy is the work of a colony of worms.

A spark is a molecule of matter, yet may it kindle the world.
Vast is the mighty ocean, but drops have made it vast.

Despise not thou a small thing, either for evil or for good;

For a look may work thy ruin, or a word create thy wealth.
The walking this way or that, the casual stopping or hastening,
Hath saved life and destroyed it, hath cast down and built up
fortunes.

Commit thy trifles unto God, for to Him is nothing trivial ;
And it is but the littleness of man that seeth no greatness in a
trifle."

Let us rejoice that a great, wise, good, and powerful Being rules the world. We are encompassed by the presence and guided by the hand of God. Blessed thought, — "He leadeth me!" And since we live in a world where trifles are of so much importance, let us be scrupulous and faithful in the little things, that the issues shall be satisfactory, and the prophet's reward, with the approving "Well done," shall become ours at the last day.

SHAKING HANDS.

THERE are people who would do great acts, but because they wait for great opportunities, life passes, and the acts of love are not done at all. Opportunities for doing greatly seldom occur; life is made up of infinitesimals. If you compute the sum of happiness in any given day, you will find that it was composed of small attentions.

FREDERICK W. ROBERTSON.

XI.

SHAKING HANDS.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. — JOHN xiii. 34.

THE story is told that an eminent minister was travelling at one time at a distance from home, and coming to a humble dwelling, sought lodgings for the night. The family, supposing that he was some poor wayfarer, kindly received him and showed him to his room. During the night they were awaked by noises coming from his room; listening, they heard bits of prayers, quotations from Scripture, and indistinct mutterings. They thought the poor man was demented or half-witted, and knew not what he was saying, and were quite distressed on account of him. In the morning they thought that they would question him, and thus ascertain something more concerning him. He gave no satisfactory answers, though he seemed to be of a very religious turn. As a final test of his mental soundness they asked him how many commandments there were. His reply was, "Eleven." Now they were quite sure that the poor man was beside himself. "And what," said they, "is the eleventh commandment?" He replied: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." Then they discovered that he was a distinguished

clergyman, and that they had been entertaining an angel unawares.

It is this so-called eleventh commandment to which I would invite your attention now. To view it in a concrete form, let me make prominent and urge particularly the Christian duty of *shaking hands*. Some time ago an article appeared, entitled, "How a stranger was taken in." The visitor was in New York, and being near a church at the time of the Wednesday-evening meeting, thought he would go in. He says: "I looked in at the door for the sexton; not a sign of one was to be seen. But in an instant a man with a pleasant face and a cheery smile was at my side, grasped my hand, said he was glad to see me, and walked me to a nice seat *not too far up* nor *too far back*, and where *there was a hymn-book*." After describing the meeting, he says: "We rose for the benediction. I bowed my head expectantly; but the pastor said: 'Now, brethren, before I pronounce the benediction, I want to charge you all to obey the eleventh commandment, which is for every man to shake hands with the man who sits next to him.'" The stranger thought he would slip away; but just as he neared the door, a hand fell on his shoulder, and the question was asked: "Are not you an eleventh-commandment man?" He had to reply "Yes;" and then he was introduced to some of the young men and to the pastor. One earnest man held him by the hand and said: "Come next Wednesday, or any time, and we will try to make you like us." The stranger went away from that meeting delighted, and feeling that he should like to go again.

There is perhaps no duty so practical and important as that of shaking hands. It is a Christian obligation that we cannot unduly magnify. The Church will flourish where this duty is observed; the Church will pine where this duty is neglected. Nor is it to be observed for politic reasons, but because a warm, loving heart lies back of it; and it is the warm, loving heart that we should have. It is true that hand-shaking is expressive of character. The omission of it bespeaks self-consciousness, with exclusiveness, and indifference to others. Then we have every variety of form. One puts his hand out timidly, like a school-boy who expects to receive a blow; another stretches his hand up to a high level and brings it down with a hearty welcome to the hand offered it. One gives you just the tips of the fingers daintily, and presses yours only with the fingers and thumb; another opens his whole palm, and your hand goes aching half a day, perhaps, for the squeeze he gave you. One raises your hand up and down with a vertical shake; another moves it horizontally back and forth. Doubtless you have illustrations of these forms in your own minds. Now I do not think the form of hand-shaking is entirely accidental. Character is depicted here; the heart goes out through the hand.

In every age there have been forms of salutation. We think of the lowly obeisance of the Orientals, the courteous customs with which they approach each other, the respect they show in the presence of strangers and superiors, the high compliments they pay to their religious teachers, and the great honor with which they address a king. Even now the Hindoos

might be an example to Christian people. The Chinese, we are told, have a whole series of salutes, from merely bending the knee, to complete prostration. The Japanese salutes by taking the slipper off his foot. The black kings of the African coast press the middle finger three times as a sign of salutation. The inhabitants of the Philippine Islands take your hand to do you honor, and then rub their faces with it. We may not adopt the Oriental salaam, come near to one another by frequent approaches and prostrations, or adopt any of these other customs; but these practices show that courtesy is a natural principle of the human heart. The patriarch Abraham was a fine example of the old-time gentleman. And how polite was Paul, who was careful to close his Epistles with salutations to the brethren, and charged the Thessalonian Christians and others to greet one another with a holy kiss! Even Judas, in betraying his Lord, deceitfully used a courteous form; he greeted Him with a kiss.

In different ages and countries customs may vary, but the principle that calls for politeness lies at the bottom of all courtesies, is inborn, and must last as long as men and society exist. The etymology of the words "courteous," "courtesy," etc., is noteworthy. These are derivatives of the word "court." Court-manners are the most elegant and polite. I say our nature prompts us to show cordiality and respect to others, and we demand as much in return. Nor does the Christian religion chill the affections or put restraint upon polite manners, but by its great impulse of love demands the warmest interest in others.

Yet it is to be confessed that Christian Churches

have in too many instances failed to express what they are supposed to feel. The Church must become more of a magnet than it has yet been. Christ lifted up is to draw all men unto Him, and it is through the Church that this drawing is to be. Love is the magnetic current that is to flow out through each individual believer's lips, heart, hands, that shall electrify and draw the world to Christ. It is useless to claim that the Church is all right, and that the fault is with the world. The mission of the Church is to be that which the mission of its Head was,—to comfort all that mourn. Multitudes are sighing for the sympathy and rest which the Church ought to furnish; and yet the Church looks to them like an aggregation of strangers and a company among whom no sympathy is to be found. Referring to the circumstances under which men are sometimes driven to suicide, a writer uses this severe language: "I believe that the Churches and the Christian community are somehow responsible for these things. I say the Churches and the Christian community, because they are wrapped in a coat of selfishness and coldness so thick that a sensitive, shrinking soul can never creep inside of it. The young man, a stranger, comes to the city. He goes to church. Nobody notices him. He goes again. Nobody seems to remember having seen him before. But in the open saloon, the gilded billiard-hall, he is a welcome guest. The man of hitherto successful business career fails. His creditors were his so-called friends for many years. They are members of the Church, but he sees their love of money is stronger than their regard for him." This is severe language,

and we do not plead guilty to the charge; but we may learn something from it. The Church ought not to make such an accusation possible. There can be no doubt that a good shaking of the hand may restrain a person from desperate purposes, wake into life a dying hope, like the rousing of a snow-enveloped traveller, and that a kind word, if it does not save life, may yet lift untold agonies from a sorrowing heart, and nerve a man for new conflicts and greater exertions. I remember meeting a person who said to me, "I count every day passed as clear gain. I rejoice when the night comes that I have one day less to live. I am in great misery, and when the end comes I shall be glad." The same day I met another person, and this one said, "My heart is dead; I have no hope; I am utterly discouraged. All is lost. If you know what it is to be utterly cast down, perfectly hopeless, you know how I feel."

Now, is this the way to be going through the world, with so much of misery around us, aching and sorrowing hearts everywhere, and the household of faith not the place of sympathy and love? Should not the Church be the hospital for suffering humanity, to which every wounded spirit should turn, and where it should seek the healing that it needs?

It must be confessed that it is almost farcical to sing, —

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love,"

so far as the truth is concerned. Instead of "sharing" each other's "griefs" and bearing "mutual burdens," there are too many professing Christians that

do not know who their fellow-disciples are; they cannot even speak one another's names! It is enough to make men weep to think that from the same communion-table there are going up to the home of the blest those who shall meet as strangers there! Imagine two of these strangers meeting, and ascertaining for the first time in heaven that they listened to the same minister and worshipped in the same sanctuary on earth! Alas if hand-shaking and love must be postponed for heaven!

Theoretically the Church is right. The Scriptures are full of love, inculcate brotherly love, tell us that "love is the fulfilling of the law," and that "by love" we shall "serve one another." The covenant too is right. We make very solemn pledges; we tell those who come with us that we will watch over them in the Lord, treat them with Christian affection, pray for them, and otherwise seek their good: but how about the practice?

It is easy to sigh, and say, "Oh, dear! I am so tired. I have tried to be friendly, but I meet with poor encouragement; people don't come half-way; my attention is not reciprocated;" or, "I am not adapted to such work; I have no gifts in that direction;" or, "I am too busy; I have no time to show attention to strangers." And so, for various reasons, this great and important duty of hand-shaking is neglected. We may account for this neglect and find excuses for it; but it is an evil to be deplored. I sincerely believe that the magnetism of a Church comes from the pews more than from the pulpit. When the members of a Church are like that New York man who said,

"Come, and we will try to make you like us," people cannot stay away; they will come. Besides, there is a Scripture injunction: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." Every light needs a reflector, and the more reflectors you put about it, the more will the light shine.

I am not pleading for the mere use of the hands, but for the love and interest that move the hands. A warm manner is better than a cold one, but a real hearty love and interest is best of all. To attain to what is implied in genuine hand-shaking demands real piety, a sense of obligation and of duty, an appreciation of circumstances, a disesteeming of self, a sincere desire to do others good. Selfishness ties the hands, and walls one in from knowing or caring for others. Selfishness leads one to say, "I cannot do this work; my cares are too many, my business is too pressing;" and so it is that barrier of "I" and "My" that stands in the way of much Church activity: we settle down to enjoy ourselves rather than to make others happy "Where there is a will there is a way;" but it is so much easier to let others do the work! It takes time and thought and effort to hunt people up, call on them and recognize them, and labor for their good. If we can only pray for the Spirit to do the work, or for the pastor to be eminently successful, how much easier it is! If we take a good seat in the Church and pay for it, and never forget to pray, or pray now and then very earnestly for the Church, is not that enough? But it is not possible for any of us to be relieved from personal obligations. We may be deceived in our desires for the prosperity of our Church,

and think that these originate in pure motives, when in our motives there is a large element of self. If we want our Church to prosper, to furnish us satisfaction in its popularity, to flatter our pride, or to make the income easy and relieve us of a pecuniary burden, the motive is not good. When the members of a Church are wholly disinterested, and desire simply the salvation of souls as an end; when they pray for this, and then act as their prayers demand, doing what they can to draw in, interest, and save souls, — the Holy Spirit will descend, and their prayers will be answered. The spirit of prayer is the great desideratum; and this will manifest itself in numberless activities, and among them the cordial use of the hand.

Oh for the galvanic power of a loving heart! Oh for the quickening that shall make the eleventh commandment a precept that is practically observed among men! Let us, as we move abroad in the world, say by our look, in our eye, in our face, by our lips and by our hand, "Welcome!" Let us greet the stranger; let us have a smile particularly for the shy and timid. And when you meet in the house of God, if you find your seat preoccupied by strangers, do not look displeased. A truly unselfish people will fill the least desirable seats first, leaving the best for strangers. You do so at home; your guest-chamber is as pleasant as you can make it. Visitors do not like to be marched the length of an aisle, or seated by the door. The New York man understood it; he seated the stranger "in a nice seat not too far up nor too far back, and where there was a hymn-book." Can you not have enough of this self-sacrificing spirit

to let strangers sit with you, or to take as yours the less desirable seats at the highest price?

Certain it is men must know one another in order to love one another. You cannot love an abstraction. There are no alienations, there cannot be alienations, among those who have not held intimate relations; none fall out but those who have loved; strangers cannot break friendship, they have never been friends. The coldness and distance of strangers may be as harmful, however, as the alienation of friends. The command is, that we shall "love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves." Let the spirit of inquiry rest down on you and go from heart to heart, and each ask, Who is my neighbor? Show an interest in others; give them a loving hand; speak a pleasant word. The young people especially should guard against being clannish, and should extend a cordial welcome to every young person of good character who comes among them. A little thoughtfulness is necessary. Sometimes persons coming newly into a congregation are at fault themselves, — they feel that they are strangers, and are disposed to hide away; but a loving, cordial manner will win them, and make them soon feel at home. Sometimes, too, among the retiring the greatest worth is found.

Cordiality costs little, and it often brings in large dividends. I believe earnestly in the power of hand-shaking; the theme is immensely important. I believe that life-long resentments and bitter animosities may be, or might have been, overcome by a cordial grasp of the hand. Try it, if there is any one to-

wards whom you are feeling hard. I urge this practical observance of the eleventh commandment, not as a matter of policy, for prudential reasons, but as required by the gospel, as inculcated by Christ, as covenanted by ourselves, and as demanded by the interests and the laws of Christ's house. It is a duty the observance of which will give pleasure to yourself and others, and contribute greatly — more than you think — to the prosperity of the Church and the honor of God.

BELIEF WITHOUT SEEN EVIDENCE.

THOSE who do not understand the life of faith fancy it to be all mysticism and effeminacy. But while it is mystical to the mere looker-on, to its possessor it is almost homely in its practical details, touching every point of life, from worship to service, from service to worship, claiming the whole being for Christ, and spending and being spent for those whom He came to redeem.

MRS. ELIZABETH P. PRENTISS.

XII.

BELIEF WITHOUT SEEN EVIDENCE.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. — JOHN xx. 29.

WE hear much of the doubting Thomas. He has impressed us more by his doubts than by anything else. It is common to say of one, "He is a doubting Thomas." Very little is said of Thomas in the New Testament. His name is only mentioned, simply enrolled, in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But for the gospel of John we should know almost nothing of him. But as in natural history you may sometimes from a single bone infer the entire structure, so from what John says you may form a correct conception of the character of Thomas. John says that when Jesus proposed to go into Judæa to raise up Lazarus, Thomas's loving language was, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." That speaks well for Thomas. Now we find him acting the part of a doubter. On the evening of the resurrection the disciples were assembled, and Jesus appeared in the midst of them. For some reason Thomas was absent. It does not appear that he was at fault; he may have had some good excuse, but he was a loser, — his absence threw him into unbelief. He said he

must know that Christ was risen; he must have ocular and tangible demonstration of the fact, or he could not believe. A week after, Jesus came again, Thomas being present, and gave him the proof; now Thomas exclaims, "My Lord and my God!" He is convinced; but it is the evidence of touch and sight. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

There are two classes of persons: one believe upon evidence; the other accept upon trust. One class want argument, demonstration, proof; the other believe from moral intuitions or inward convictions, without the evidence of touch and sight. On the one side are the men of reason; on the other, the men of faith. Thomas represents the doubting school; Jesus pronounces in favor of the school of faith. As civilization advances and different influences prevail, one or the other of these classes preponderates. At the one extreme lies rationalism, and at the other, superstition; and minds sway to one or the other of these extremes. In a credulous age men will believe in anything,—divination, omens, spectres, pretended miracles, imaginary cures, and whatever empirics are disposed to palm upon them. In a rationalistic age very little is believed. God is ignored, religion repudiated, and all things resolved into matter, force, and natural law. Before the Reformation the world was intensely superstitious; since the Reformation it has become intensely rationalistic. Extremes beget extremes; and hence we see this constant oscillation of the human mind. If we try to detach a person from

a false religion, he goes over into no religion. If we try to convert a heathen from his many gods, he comes to believe that there is no God. If we seek to draw a man away from formalism and superstition, he drops away from all forms and has no religion. Some years ago the tide of unbelief rose high, welling up in Germany and France, spreading over England, and reaching even the United States. There is abroad at the present day much latent scepticism, and perhaps as much that is open and bold. Scientists have made war upon Revelation; the supernatural is ignored, mysteries are explained in the light of reason, even prayer is called in question, Christianity has been pronounced a failure, and it has seemed as if the Lord must come to save His Church, or it would be swept away. Even many in the Church have so far breathed the deadly atmosphere and yielded to the stupefying influences as to come to hold their faith in a feeble way.

It would seem, however, that a reaction has set in. By natural law we look for such a change. Some men of science are turning against those of their number who ride hobbies and hold unphilosophical opinions, and are excluding them from their academies, from their society, and even from their friendship. They are also defining their own position, admitting their ignorance, and confessing that they deal only with nature, and that there is a realm into which they do not essay to go. That realm is the supernatural; and men who claim to deal with facts, and yet ignore this greatest of all facts,—that beyond nature there is a Power that transcends nature,—stultify themselves.

This they are coming to see. But as attention is turned more to the infinite and incomprehensible, it is quite likely that conjecture and imagination will next take possession of the human mind. As it is easy to see a face in the moon, to make pictures in the blazing fire, and to paint vast landscapes in the cloudy skies, so gazing into the unknowable, men may see much that is visionary and false. We need to be guarded, therefore, against going too far, or seeing too much, and believing everything. At present believers have to resist a sceptical influence; but it is quite likely that by and by they will have to resist an opposite superstitious influence. From doubting, men will come to take more on trust than they ought. And then we shall see a return to extravagance in religion, — formalism, pietism, the surrender of conscience, and an undue exaltation of articles of faith. As between the two, I would prefer credulity to rationalism; I would rather believe too much than too little. And I would rather contend against credulity than rationalism; for in the rationalist you must plant a faith, while in the over-credulous you have only to lop off an exuberant growth. Possibly we may not have to choose between these extremes, but as intelligence increases and society improves, the universal heart will rest *in equilibrio* between doubting scepticism on the one side, and weak credulity on the other. Doubtless the great need here and everywhere is a baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is not so much by argument that sceptics are to be convinced as by a Divine influence upon their hearts. A statesman, whose father and grandfather were celebrated before him, used this

language in a Commencement address: "Nothing is so much needed as a thorough revival of religion throughout the nation. Any one looking at the present state of things will be impressed with its truth. The worldly-mindedness in the Christian public, the loose ideas of morals and honesty, the rings and combinations to corrupt men, and especially the young, the accursed thirst for gold and haste to be rich, the boldness and prevalency of godlessness and infidelity in their thousand forms, the untrustworthiness in persons in places of power and trust, the formal attendance of many on the Church, and the general indifference to the gospel, with a thousand other things of like temper and tendency, force upon the thoughtful observer the need of a powerful revival of true religion throughout the land." The truth is, it is men's hearts that are at fault more than their heads; and argumentation, reasoning, addresses to the understanding, without Divine aid, are vain. Let the Spirit breathe on human prejudices, proud theories, and false beliefs, and they melt like the reluctant snow under a burning sun. Nations are to be born in a day; but it will not be because reason has attained such ascendancy, and the evidences of religion have gained such sudden power, but because the Holy Spirit has shed upon the people a disposition to believe. It was not the force of Peter's argument that convinced so many at Pentecost, but the Divine influence affecting the heart. It is possible to attach too much weight to reason, and to make too many appeals to the understanding. When a man's desires are right, it is easy to convince him. When the Spirit works in us

to will and to do, outside argument is of but little account. We have seen men who had fortified themselves with infidel objections, and whose hearts were like bristling ramparts, brought down without a blow. Some little incident, a child's voice or a touching providence, had dissolved all their prejudices, answered all their arguments, banished all their doubts, and led them to cry, in the ardor of a new affection, "My Lord and my God!"

Belief seems to be the normal condition of the soul. As man comes from the hand of God he seems to be a believing creature. One of the most endearing characteristics of little children is their perfect trust. They have no more fear of want than the birds that sing in the branches. They believe what you tell them; they dispute and question nothing. It is only as they come in contact with the world, and get experience and find themselves deceived, that they learn to distrust, suspect, and disbelieve. It would seem, too, that the Creator would not make man a disbelieving being. Though endowing him with reason and with a nature to demand proofs, still He would naturally make his bent toward credence, toward his Creator, and toward Christian faith. He would keep some place for Himself in the heart of man, just as painters and engravers write their names with *pinxit* or *delineator* in some part of their work. It is by a hardening and slow process that man gets his face away from God. A man has to reason himself out of God's presence, and into the dark, and at a distance from God; it is not where he belongs. It would be strange if God made children with a nature to reject Him. Man

is made with moral intuitions and a mind prepared to accept the truth of the Divine existence without proof. The idea of God is axiomatic, and disbelief is something abnormal. The mind demands no proof that the whole is greater than a part, or that things equal to the same thing are equal to one another; so but for sin it would as readily admit all that is connected with a Divine Revelation. The moral instinct would lead the soul to God as spontaneously as natural instinct draws a child to its mother's bosom. Among the signs of the times, showing that a reaction from rationalism and unbelief has set in, may be mentioned the recognition by an eminent scientist, Professor Max Müller, of Oxford, of a third faculty in man distinct from faith and reason; namely, the faculty of believing without proof. What is that but moral intuition and Christian faith? Some persons have supposed Christian faith to be mere credence,—a belief in things incongruous and unreasonable, a belief in absurdities. No wonder, so supposing, that they rejected it. It is rather belief in things not in conflict with reason, but beyond reason,—things which we feel to be true, which accord with our moral instincts, but which we may not be able to establish by argument or formal proof. We may know the truth of things without being able to demonstrate it. Some good old saint, in whose heart Christ dwells, shall have better evidence of God's being and revelation than the most accomplished and learned sceptic. Faith is not credence in fictions, but a laying hold of the soul, without logic or argument, upon things that are true. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evi-

dence of things not seen." Faith is substance, not fancy; the evidence of things that exist, only they are not seen. A distinction is to be made between belief without evidence, and belief without seen evidence. When faith is thus understood, as demanding, not that men shall accept impossibilities and absurdities, but simply things lying beyond the realm of reason, we may hope that it will come to be thought better of, not as in conflict with reason or as belittling reason, but as the best and most ennobling of human faculties. Says one: "It is a commonly recognized principle of philosophy that it is the contest, not the victory, which brings the most satisfaction. An active mind tires of that which is known. Malebranche and Lessing say that if they held the truth in their hand as a captive, they would open the hand and let it fly, that they might pursue after it and capture it again. This destroys moral earnestness, and empties faith of its realities. Many minds of speculative disposition are tired of that which is known. Much of what is called progress is simply a chase through the woods for the sake of the excitement there is in it."

We find the Saviour putting honor upon faith. Thomas believed because he had seen; but, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." A recent writer says: "Few verses of Tennyson's are quoted so often and so confidently as —

" 'There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.'"

Yet they have the smallest basis of truth. Thomas was honest. But did his gracious and gentle Master com-

pliment him upon his honest doubts and hold him up as superior to other disciples? Just the reverse!" The evidence of sight leaves no room for faith; what logic and argument establish, we must receive. But where, then, shall simple trust come in? Society is held together by faith, not by sight. The child believes in his father, the wife in her husband, friend in friend, the tradesman in those with whom he does business, not because of compacts and forms, but from a general belief in human nature. Let this confidence cease, and society would be dissolved. The father would be pained to know that his child trusted him only as he kept making promises and convincing him that he would not cast him off. Love between husband and wife, or friend and friend, is the love of faith; and when suspicions arise, the love is gone. Without confidence in purchasers, employees, transit companies, etc., all traffic would come to an end. Blessed, in this low point of view, is faith. Take one of those large business establishments such as you see in any city, and it is a symbol and an embodiment through and through of faith, — faith in clerks, faith in watchmen, faith in insurance companies, faith in buyers, faith in strong walls and timbers and iron safes. A man could not sleep without faith.

But better than this is religious faith; it gives a man the same repose in his soul with respect to eternal concerns that secular faith gives with respect to home, society, and business. God wishes us to trust Him as children trust their parents and as we trust one another. Not to trust is displeasing to God and painful to ourselves. The most unhappy state in

which a man can be, is that of doubt and unbelief. In this state the mind has no sure anchorage, and is driven about aimlessly on a dark sea. Such men we have seen, subjecting everything to the test of reason, and made miserable thereby, — puzzling themselves all the while with the deep things of God, and sinking down with exhaustion, or made sad and gloomy, resolving everything into fate, and submitting to life as a sheer necessity, literally without hope and without God in the world. Even among professed believers a sceptical mind is a most unfortunate possession. It makes them sit as critics on God's methods and ways; and as they cannot understand these, they become reproachful and unhappy. They pry into the Old Testament, and they think that God was hard on the Jews; they study the New Testament, and they find doctrines there, especially in the Epistles, which they cannot understand. They argue about things in the light of reason, and they are disposed to say what God ought to do. Having no great sense of sin, they put a slight value on redemption; and if God crosses their path by some sorrow or disappointment, they are filled with resentment. Oh, how different is this from that sweet trust which says, "I know Whom I have believed;" which sees a Father's hand in everything, and finds nothing in Old Testament or New that cannot patiently be left for the fuller explanations of the Last Day! I would not be tormented with one of those disbelieving minds for the world. I see no more of mystery in Revelation than I see in Nature. The arcana of this physical universe contain things quite as inexplicable as any of the deep things of provi-

dence and grace. There is more that is incomprehensible out of the Bible, in substance and form, life and motion, wind and tide, tree, rock, and flower, than there is in it; and so I rest my faith on the simple "Thus saith the Lord," waiting the revelations of the Last Day. I think the simplicity of an humble believer is to be coveted rather than the learning of the greatest philosopher, if learning shall lead to the rejection of the Bible and the denial of a personal God. The faith of the honest Scotchman is better, who, when he was rallied with the words, "Now, Jamie, you don't believe that the whale swallowed Jonah?" replied: "Yes, I do! I believe it because the Bible says so; and if the Bible said it was a herring that swallowed Jonah, I would believe it the same." It is the believer's confidence that gives the soul peace. There is satisfaction in seeing; but "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Dr. Arnold of Rugby in one of his letters wrote: "It must be always understood that there are difficulties in the way of all religion, — such, for instance, as the existence of evil, — which can never be fairly solved by human powers; all that can be done intellectually is to point out the equal or greater difficulties of atheism or scepticism, — and this is enough to justify a good man's understanding in being a believer. If I were talking with an atheist, I should lay a great deal of stress on faith as a necessary condition of our nature. Faith does no violence to our understanding. The Devil's religion is quite as much beset with intellectual difficulties as God's religion is. There are thousands of Christians who see the difficulties which the sceptic sees, quite as

clearly as he does, and who long as eagerly as he can do for that time when they shall know even as they are known. But then they see clearly the difficulties of unbelief, and know that even intellectually they are far greater. And in the meanwhile they are contented to live by faith, and find that in so doing their course is practically one of perfect light."

It is a significant fact that Dr. Arnold, just before he died, was heard to repeat the words of our text. "His wife, returning to his room, observed him lying still, but with his hands clasped, his lips moving, and his eyes raised upward as if engaged in prayer; when all at once he repeated firmly and earnestly, 'And Jesus said unto him, Thomas,'"—his own name was Thomas,—"'because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'" Alas that so few know the blessedness of the "perfect light!"

Reason is all the while insisting upon proof, and faith has but little room. The demand in Jesus' time was, "Master, show us a sign from heaven." Jesus replied, "There shall no sign be given but the sign of the prophet Jonah." The rich man in torment entreated that messengers might be sent to testify to his brethren, lest they should come into that place of torment; but Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. . . . If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." The rabble at the cross cried, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe

Him." As if they had not had evidence enough already! If Jesus had left the cross, it would not have convinced them any more. Three days after, He left the grave, and yet they were not convinced. Thus many persons think that if they had more argument, demonstration, proof, they would believe; but the difficulty is with their heart, not with their head. It is not evidence, evidence, evidence, that men need, but faith, faith, faith. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Would I have you believe that which you do not understand? Most certainly. There is very little that you do understand; you assume, and act. Do so in religion. "We walk by faith, not sight." I fear that ministers labor too much to make things plain; we linger too long in the field of apologetics; we pity the sceptic, and we try to relieve his doubt, and compel belief. Oh that we were more Christ-like, simply to say, "Come, come, come!" Let the yearning heart do its own convincing, and the felt need of a Saviour draw the soul to Him.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Jesus does stoop to a weak faith. He did not deny Thomas the evidence that he sought. He put honor upon faith, and then gave him the evidence of touch and sight. So if He sees in us the least germ of faith, He encourages it, while He does not refuse reason, but satisfies it with the most convincing proofs. It was well that Thomas doubted, for now we have more convincing proofs of Christ's resurrection. It was a saying of one of the early popes—Leo the Great—that the

disciples doubted, and Thomas in particular, to the end that we might not need to doubt. Striking also is the contrast between Christ's words to Mary Magdalene and those to Thomas. She believed in His resurrection, and so to her He said, "Touch Me not." Thomas doubted His resurrection, and so to him He said, "Touch Me." Thus He accommodates Himself to our states, restraining or encouraging, as the need may be.

We are to bear in mind that Thomas was not a denier, but a doubter; he did not disbelieve, he was simply not convinced. That may be the state of some of you; but if you do not yield to the evidences adduced, if you shut your eyes to proofs furnished, your doubts will harden into unbelief. Oh, my friends, "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation." This sin of unbelief is a great sin. Come near yourself; behold this Jesus; see those gaping wounds; put your finger into the prints; thrust your hand into the side; and be not faithless, but believing. Take this Christ as your Christ, acknowledge Him, embrace Him, and say with the delighted Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"

GIVING SYSTEMATICALLY.

It has been frequently wished by Christians that there were some rule laid down in the Bible fixing the proportion of their property which they ought to contribute to religious uses. This is as if a child should go to his father and say, "Father, how many times in the day must I come to you with some testimonial of my love? How often will it be necessary to show my affection for you?" The father would of course reply, "Just as often as your feelings prompt you, my child, and no oftener." Just so Christ says to His people, "Look at Me, and see what I have done and suffered for you; and then give Me just what you think I deserve. I do not wish anything forced."

EDWARD PAYSON.

XIII.

GIVING SYSTEMATICALLY.

Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. — COR. xvi. 2.

GIVING is a practical duty, and one that needs frequent enforcement. Giving began with Adam. Sacrifices were demanded from our first parents. Cain and Abel made their offerings. We early read of tithes. Abram gave tithes to Melchizedek. Jacob vowed at Bethel, "Of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee." To the time of Christ the giving of a tenth was a standing requirement. It is reckoned that a conscientious Jew must have given annually one third of his income to religious uses. The first-fruits of the field and the firstlings of the flock were required. Money also had to be paid at the birth of the first male child. Then the corners of the field and whatever fell from the reaper's hand had to be left for the poor. Every seven years all debts were remitted, and for that year the entire fields, not the corners only, but all the land, belonged to the poor. The support of the Levites was a tax too, who received a tenth of all the annual products. Then there were sin-offerings and trespass-offerings —

a tax of half a shekel for the sanctuary — and other gifts.

Now, did Christ's coming annul this much giving? It broke some chains; it delivered from the ceremonial law. Did it release from obligations to give? The Sermon on the Mount speaks of doing "alms." The awards of the judgment are based on feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and so on; and these acts are spoken of as done to Christ. The apostolic charge to Paul and Barnabas was that they should "remember the poor." From the Epistles we learn that it was very common to take up collections for persons in need. Macedonia and Achaia made a contribution for poor saints at Jerusalem. To the Romans Paul wrote: "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity." In the margin it reads "liberally." To the Corinthians he wrote, "As I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye;" so it would seem there was no Church that escaped. And why should any Church wish to escape: How could it be a Church of Christ, and try to escape? Giving is a law of Christ's house, and is a form of worship, — it may be the most spiritual form of worship. It is easy to pray and sing; it is not so easy to give.

Now look at the text. It falls into natural divisions, and is easily remembered.

1. "Upon the first day of the week." That means system, — not at casual and odd times, but statedly and constantly. "The first day of the week," — that means every Sunday. The envelope system then is Scriptural; the every Sabbath collection is sanctioned. Why should it not be the custom everywhere? You

say, "I cannot be troubled with so constant a care ;" you prefer to give once for all, — once a month, or once a year. Why do you not worship in that way, — pray by the month, sing for three months, or worship for a year? Why do you not eat in that way? Why this never-varying round of three meals a day? It is said of Benjamin Franklin that when a lad he was worried with his father's long blessings at the table; and so when a barrel of salted meat arrived, he suggested to his father that he should say grace over the whole barrel at once, and so be done with this daily giving of thanks. That is much the way that some persons would like to dispose of this matter of benevolence. Giving is a form of worship; and why should it not be as regular and constant as singing and praying? At the same time the business of some men is so complicated that a weekly gift based on a percentage of the income can hardly be made. Still system, in distinction from caprice, irregularity, and fitful giving, is required.

System, moreover, is of great value in everything. Work moves forward better that is governed by rule. Factories and mills, railroads and steamships, families and schools cannot get on without rules. Why should Church benevolence be left to chance? Some conscientious persons who have a steady income keep a book in which they charge themselves every week or month with sums due the Lord, and from the whole amount give as cases arise. There is benefit in this to the person himself. One gentleman who tried it says: "This system has saved me from commercial dangers, by leading me to simplify business and avoid

extensive credits. It has made me a better merchant: for the monthly pecuniary observations which I have been wont to take, though often quite laborious, have brought me to a better knowledge of the state of my affairs, and led me to be more cautious and prudent than I otherwise should have been." Not only did system make him a better merchant, it also made him a better man. He adds, "It has been of vast advantage to me, enabling me to feel that my life is directly employed for God. It has tended to increase my faith, and led me to look forward with greater joy towards my heavenly home. It has afforded me great happiness in enabling me to portion out the Lord's money, and has enlisted my mind more in the progress of Christ's cause." It is told of a man who was about to be immersed, that he called the minister to stop until he could get his pocket-book, saying, "I wish to have my pocket-book baptized with me." There is a law for the pocket-book as well as the mind and the heart.

2. We leave the first part of the text to take up the second: "Let *every one* of you lay by him in store." If "every one," then how are the poor going to escape? Ought not the widow to have been excused? Yet Christ commended her, and said her two mites were more than the rich man's all. Giving is a luxury; then why should the poor be deprived of it? Men that have been chosen rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of God want to give something, and God will give them something to give. If the quality of mercy is twice blessed, blessing him that gives and him that takes, God will see that the poor have this

blessing,—the blessing of giving as well as of receiving. And if there are sanctifying influences connected with giving, God will see that the poor receive this good.

Nor can the purchasing power of money indicate the moral value of a gift. The poor man's penny blessed of God may do more for missions than the rich man's gold without God's blessing. A penny and a prayer given make more than a hundred pennies without prayer. Of course the common treasury receives all, but it is only a part that constitutes the real seed of the kingdom. Nor is any one so poor that he can give nothing. If he has nothing, he can promise or borrow, and make it up afterward. If he is a beggar, he can beg one penny more. We are told that "the Hindoo converts are very poor, the average earnings of each one not exceeding six cents per day. Yet many cheerfully and regularly give one tenth of their income to benevolent objects. The women in some places daily, before cooking, dip a handful out of the often scanty provisions of family rice and set it apart for the Lord."

Further, "every one" means not only the poor, but also the *children*. Children should be taught to give. Says one, "Children's influence is too much overlooked in the mission-work. Parents, Sabbath-school teachers, and missionary agents do not take the pains they might to create in them a missionary spirit. As soon as they can speak and go alone, they should be bent into missionary workers. They can be taught to take as much interest in the condition of the freedmen, Chinese, and Indians, as in 'Mother Hubbard,' 'Jack and the Bean-stalk,' etc. Especially when they are called upon to give their pennies, should it be ex-

plained to them for what purposes their moneys are solicited."

3. The third division of the text says: "As God hath prospered him." Some give the same amount, prosperity aside. From year to year it is the same dollar or dollars; their income may be vastly greater, but there is no increase in giving. The text says, "As God hath prospered" you. It is God who gives prosperity, and you ought to give back proportionately to Him. Prosperity is the gauge of giving. The amounts may be different; but give what you can every time,—that will keep things even. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Men are quite willing, when their income diminishes, to cut down their gifts; but they are not so willing, when their income increases, to enlarge them. Now, God does not ask for fixed sums. He lays it on every man's conscience to give according to that he hath. There is a fitness, then, in a man's setting sums aside when prospered, that he may know how much he has, and how much he has to give. From the general law of giving according to the ability there is no loophole of escape. Yet what vast numbers give nothing, and what vast numbers give less than they ought! The heathen give more to sustain their idol-worship than Christians give to enable idol-worshippers to know the true God. The tithes are withheld, and hence the windows of heaven are not opened, and the blessing comes not. "The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Do you think if the Lord Jesus in

person, instead of the Church officers, took up the collections, and you put your purses into His hands, He would hand them back and never take any more than what you now give Him? Yet you claim to love Him, and you say that all that you have is His!

4. One part of the text remains: "That there be no gatherings when I come." Paul did not believe in spasmodic efforts. He wanted the Churches to give from principle. He did not wish to make thrilling appeals, and then pass the plates round before the heat was over. He would have a regular, intelligent setting apart of a certain sum beforehand. He did not want the gatherings when he should come. He did not want his presence to affect the amount contributed. He did not believe in melting people down or lashing them up, and then taking advantage of their present weakness. He was very cautious to guard against involuntary and impulsive giving. To the Corinthians he writes: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." "Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness." How much better this is than accidental and frenzied giving! People should make some discrimination between objects, and give with reason and fitness. There are those whose giving depends on the orator, and not on the object. With them, Foreign or Home Missions stand on the same footing as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. If an agent can draw tears, he can draw money.

Now, Paul says: "Let it not be so. Give, but do it with forethought and preparation, systematically and from principle. Let me not see the collectors going about, or hear the rattle of coin. Let that be done beforehand, — not when I come."

Thus we have articulated the text. It has four quarters. First, *system*: "Upon the first day of the week." Second, *personal duty*: "Let every one of you lay by him in store." Third, *measure of benevolence*: "As God hath prospered him." Fourth, *intelligent, cheerful, and appropriate giving*: "That there be no gatherings when I come."

Now, my friends, no man ever yet gave to the Lord and lost by it. I can furnish you with some good proof-texts on that point. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." Do you ask for a sure place of investment? Here it is: "He that hath pity on the poor *lendeth unto the Lord*; and that which he hath given will He pay him again."

Now, my friends, by the memory of what Christ has done for you, by your obligations of stewardship, by the needs of a dying world, by the shortness of time, by the nearness of heaven, give as you have opportunity, and with no stintedness that shall make you ashamed up there!

WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

TAKE heart ! — The Waster builds again, —
A charmed life old Goodness hath ;
The tares may perish, but the grain
Is not for death.

God works in all things ; all obey
His first propulsion from the night :
Wake thou and watch ! — the world is gray
With morning light !

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

XIV.

WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come. — ISAIAH xxi. 11-12.

WATCHMEN are spoken of very early in the history of the race. As danger would arise from wild animals or from human foes, watching must have originated almost as soon as the world was peopled. A systematic division of the night into watches seems to have been the custom in Egypt. We read that "in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians." Among the Israelites, watchmen were stationed at the gates of Jerusalem, who by their voice, with or without the aid of a trumpet, gave signals and furnished information. At night the watchmen perambulated the city. We read in the Song of Solomon: "The watchmen that go about the city found me." The Jews divided the night into three watches, while the Romans, imitating the Greeks, divided it into four; hence in the New Testament we find mention made of the fourth watch. It was from the custom of appointing watchmen thus that this figure came to be applied to religious teach-

ers; we read, "I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace." "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel." It appears that there was an actual watch-tower in Jerusalem; and it is as if standing upon this, and looking off into the distant East, that the watchman in the text is represented as hearing the cry, "What of the night?" and answering it.

We have here a complete but obscure prophecy. It is all contained in the two verses cited, and is so brief and meagre that commentators have not agreed as to its meaning. "The burden of Dumah." The term "burden" probably means that the message is of a weighty, or serious character. By "Dumah" is meant Idumæa, in which Mount Seir was situated, out of which the cry, "Watchman, what of the night?" is represented as coming. It was a time now — 713 B. C. — of darkness to the people of God. Night is often employed as an emblem of darkness, and is so employed here. The Jews were in a depressed condition; the Edomites, or people of Idumæa, were desolating their country, and soon the last two tribes would be carried into seventy years captivity in Babylon. Some think the inquiry, "Watchman, what of the night?" expressed a sincere desire on the part of the Edomites to know what was to be the fate of their own people. It is commonly thought, however, that this was the language of mockery; the Jews are taunted with their depressed condition, and for the sake of reminding them of their misfortune and of deepening their sorrow are asked how it fares with them. The inquiry is repeated, either to indicate the interest felt,

or to make the taunt more cutting. The reply of the prophet as Israel's watchman falls on the ears of the Edomites with the weight of doom. "The morning cometh, and also the night;" that is, as is commonly understood, morning cometh to the Jews, but night to the Edomites, — morning to us, night to you. After a time the captivity of the Jews would end, and with songs they would return to their own land; but on their enemies, the Edomites, a darker night would settle, and heavier calamities fall, than any that the Jews had known. And so it proved. Fearful prophecies with regard to Edom, or Idumæa, were uttered, such as these: "I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, O Mount Seir," — the mount out of which the inquiry of the text is represented as coming. "I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return." "The cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; . . . thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof." And these prophecies have been literally fulfilled.

With this understanding of the text, it is to be observed that there is a sense in which the same inquiry and answer may be applied to other times. The Church of God has had her seasons of depression, of darkness, and she has never been without enemies who were ready to taunt her in the language of mockery and unbelief. In the dark periods of the Church the inquiry has ever been, "Where is thy God?" and in all the history of the past no form has been wanting, no species of tactics overlooked, in which the evidences of Christianity have not been assailed. It would make a long catalogue to enumerate the various

enemies to the Church which have arisen during the centuries, and the form and method of their assaults. But however triumphant they may have been at times, however much it may have seemed that the foundations were to be destroyed, however sad and dark the experience through which the Church has passed, the day-star has at length arisen, and the morning broken of strength and victory. Nor has the warfare ceased. New enemies have arisen, and fresh assaults are made. As one writes: "The earth is not still and at rest. Men of every class are searching after an unknown good. The demon of infidelity is stalking abroad, knocking at the palaces of the rich and the cottages of the poor, transforming himself into this shape and that, and becoming all things, except an angel of good, to all men. Numerous and mighty agencies both for good and evil are abroad and at work. Light and darkness strove on the face of the deep before this goodly universe rose out of chaos, and they have their strivings still. But if the antagonistic forces on the one side as well as the other be pressed into the unfettered conflict, the lovers of God and the friends of man have nothing to fear, but much to hope. 'Christianity, like Rome, has had both the Gaul and Hannibal at her gates; but as the Eternal City calmly offered for sale, and sold at an undepreciated price, the very ground on which the Carthaginian had fixed his camp, with equal calmness may Christianity imitate her example, assured that, as in so many past instances of premature triumph on the part of her enemies, the ground they occupy will one day be her own.'"

History furnishes numerous instances in which the Church has risen from a depressed condition to hurl back upon her enemies the weapons which they had used. There have been times of obscurity, but the Church has emerged from the darkness like the sun from an eclipse. The condition of the world in the sixteenth century was one of gloom. Superstition and formalism had settled down upon the Church, and the darkness was very great. Christianity before the Reformation was like the Jews in Babylon; but if any one had asked, as when this language was first used, "What of the night?" the answer could have been returned with equal confidence: "The morning cometh." Wicliffe was "the morning-star of the Reformation;" Luther was the effulgent day. There never was a time in France when infidelity seemed so triumphant, or the Church brought so low, as during the Reign of Terror. It was a period in which apparently God was ruled out of the world. But it was a period that showed that nations, like men, cannot prosper without acknowledging the true God. So dense was the darkness that it could not last long. As one writes: "The people recoiled from the impious and horrid system; and that same Convention which had publicly disowned the Most High, and proclaimed death to be an eternal sleep, was constrained to recognize by enactment the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, and by an impious festival professedly to restore the Eternal to the nation's faith and homage." Three hundred years ago it seemed that astronomy had arrayed itself against the Scriptures, because it taught that the sun, and not the earth, was the centre of the solar system.

But soon the discovery of Galileo came to be an accepted fact, and the language of Scripture, which represents the earth as standing still, and the sun as rising and setting around it, was seen to be simply a popular, rather than a scientific, method of stating a truth. Not many years ago geology presented some facts that seemed not to harmonize with the Mosaic cosmogony. But geology is a modern and an immature science, and when it has fully established its facts, it is impossible that it should present anything in conflict with the writings of Moses. The books of Nature and Revelation were written by the same Hand, and perfectly agree. If any wish to believe that the world, by its fossils, strata, and *débris*, gives evidence of having stood through indefinite ages, they can do so by supposing a hiatus between the first and second verses of Moses' narrative, or they may regard the days as extended periods of time.

Nor need we fear, however threatening modern discoveries may appear. Either they will be proved to be mistaken, false, or else they will strengthen and corroborate the Inspired Record. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the Lord endureth forever." Says Dr. Guthrie: "The only result of using the facts of science to undermine the foundations of religion will resemble that wrought by some angry torrent when, sweeping away soil and sand and rubbish, it lays bare, and thereby makes more plain, the solid rock on which the house stands, unmoved and unmovable." Beaten on other fields, it seems as if Infidelity

were stealing into the Church itself, and by professed friendship were attempting to destroy the principles which it dares not openly assault. Professing righteousness and exalting reason, it accepts the Scriptures, but makes of miracles myths, and of narratives fables. Or magnifying forms, it eviscerates the substance of the gospel, and turns the ordinances of religion into a vain show. Or while professing to admire the spirit of the New Testament, behind antinomian warrants it encourages to the widest liberty, and permits to sin, that grace may abound. The law is brought down to man's lowest appetites, and the worst deeds are justified under sanction of law. Again, on the part of some men there is a sympathetic regard for persons of a sceptical tendency, and with the wish to relieve their troubled minds there is a lowering of the New Testament standard,—a twisting of the statements of the gospel and of the teachings of Revelation, a concession to the doubts and speculations of these persons, and a fraternizing with them for the sake of their good-will. Some of the concessions made relate to questions of inspiration, the antiquity of man, the unity of the race, a second probation, endless punishment, etc. In a quarterly review a new work was noticed approvingly, not long ago, with this statement: "Touching the antiquity of man, the author remarks that the chronology of the Bible is not determinate." And so we find a professedly Christian writer adopting the theory of the existence of human races anterior to Adam, holding that man began to be hundreds of thousands of years before Adam, and that the race is in a state of constant progressive develop-

ment! But while one religious journal condemned this book as "wrong at both ends, and having no claim to the receptive faculty of any intelligent believer in the only authentic record of the origin and destiny of the human family," another religious journal made extracts from it, quoted its statements as worthy of credence, and sent these out into thousands of Christian homes. Then, further, some who have held high ecclesiastical positions, or who have been distinguished as religious teachers or scholars, have not simply made concessions, but gone quite over to the enemy's side.

But whatever may be the disguises, the opposition, or the assaults of the enemies of Christianity, it is not possible that they should inflict deadly wounds. They may hinder and hurt, but the cause of God moves onward. We who are put in charge of the Church's interests must exercise watchfulness, courage, and fidelity. Doing this, we are sure of the Divine help and of the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom throughout all the earth. To the inquiry, whether put seriously or in derision, "What of the night?" we answer, "The morning cometh." The cause that has been tried through so many ages is not now to be destroyed. The truths that have been established by miracles and prophecy, and strengthened and confirmed by the developments of history, by modern discoveries, and by the grand climacteric march and movement of all events towards the perfect reign of Christ on earth, are not to be stultified or negated by a few opposing sceptics, or seriously endangered by any temporary darkness with which they may be obscured. Shadows are

but evidence that the sun shines; eclipses may frighten, but they soon pass away. "Let there be light," is the Divine fiat, and in due time the morning will break, harbinger of the millennial day. Let not the timid have fears, then, for the cause of God; let them not try to steady what God has established. Great changes may come upon nations, they may even be swept away; but an unerring voice declares that "No weapon that is formed against Zion shall prosper." "The gates of hell shall not prevail against" her.

But while morning shall come to the Church of God, we are not to forget that darkness shall cover her enemies. As the Edomites finally suffered the severest judgments, and were swept away, so shall it be with all who mock the Church of God or array themselves against her. Yes, the morning cometh, and "also the night," — night to every one, small or great, who does not identify himself with the people and house of God. "The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." It is a solemn question, To which of these classes do you personally belong? While morning is undoubtedly to come to the Church of God, will it come to you? Are your dark experiences to terminate in endless day? Shall your "sun go no more down forever"? When you have passed the "gloomy vale," will it be light ever after? When the night of weeping is past, will joy come to you in the morning? On the island of Malta a beloved missionary, many years ago, was called by the providence of God to bury his wife. He laid her precious form in the ceme-

tery around which extend the massive fortifications of that island. On those walls sentinels are always stationed, and all night through, at regular intervals, the voice of the watchman may be heard, but a few paces from that grave, crying, "All is well!" So the angel guards look approvingly down upon each sacred grave, watching through the sleeper's night, and waiting with solemn interest that joyful morning when with trumpet-notes they shall call the dead to life. Can the watch-cry over your grave be, "All is well"? If not, then you belong to that other class, with respect to whom all is not well. You are with Edom rather than Israel, — with the enemies, and not the friends of God. And this is the class to whom the watchman lifts the warning cry, "The morning cometh, and also the night! the night!" Oh, my friends! be admonished; and if you wish to know how it is with you, ask with a right spirit and determination, and a warning of woe shall be turned into a promise of joy. "If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come."

WHAT DOEST THOU HERE, ELIJAH?

WHERE is the faith that never staggers; the hand that never hangs down; the knee that never trembles? Children grow fretful as they grow sleepy. Paul longed to depart, to be with Christ; yet he was willing to abide in the flesh, because it was needful for others. While we are ready to go, we must be willing to stay, if God has anything for us to do or suffer. To be impatient for retreat, especially as soon as we meet with disappointment, is unmanly and sinful.

WILLIAM JAY.

XV.

WHAT DOEST THOU HERE, ELIJAH?

What doest thou here, Elijah? — I KINGS xix. 9.

WE have here the gloomy picture of a discouraged man. It is the last man that we should think of as coming into this state. David might get discouraged, for he had many enemies and suffered much. And Paul the wanderer! But Paul seemed ever buoyant. Here was Elijah, the most eminent of the Hebrew prophets, hiding away from a woman's rage, and wishing that he might die! And he never died at all; for he was translated,—it was a luxury that he might never know! It is said that when men wish to die, it is then that they are least prepared to die. After all, it is natural to be discouraged. No man can be always on the mount; we have our ups and downs. Life is full of changes, and when trouble comes, or foes arise, or evil threatens, we are inclined to run and hide ourselves, like Elijah. It is such a strong man that we find in this plight that we are the more astonished. And yet we are comforted in thinking that the strong may be discouraged as well as we. Up to this time the prophet had been bold, faithful, and zealous; but now he is overcome. He was so great a proclaimer of truth that John the Baptist was

likened to him, and called the Elias that was to come. It was a special honor, in addition to translation, that Elijah should have been permitted to visit the earth with Moses, and converse with the Saviour on the Mount. How could it have been that this man should have become discouraged? And yet so it was. The wonderful exhibition of Divine power on Carmel had passed. The false prophets had been slain, and the three and a half years of drought were over. While the clouds blackened with rain Ahab hastened to Jezreel to tell Jezebel of what Elijah had done. "Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." Finding that neither warnings nor judgments availed, that the nation and its rulers would not repent, and alarmed for himself, the prophet fled to Beersheba, thence into the wilderness, "and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die. . . . And as he lay and slept, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat." This was done the second time; and in the strength of the food furnished he went forty days and forty nights to Horeb, which is another name for Sinai. Entering a cave, he lodged there. "And, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." Now God replies in that mem-

orable scene of the wind, the earthquake, the fire, and the still small voice, repeating at the close the same question: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and receiving the same answer.

Here was a man, who ordinarily was great and good and brave, showing all the weakness of a child. You will notice that Elijah was discouraged, first, in opposition to *experience*. If any man should have been hopeful, he was the man. Of Elijah's childhood we know nothing. Like another Melchizedek, his parentage is not given. For aught that appears to the contrary, the chariot that took him from the earth might have brought him to the earth. The first incident of his life that is recorded is his denunciation of Ahab. Ahab was so wicked a king that it is written, he "did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." Now Elijah appears, and utters this solemn asseveration: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." The prophecy was fulfilled; a drought prevailed over the land for three and a half years. But where was Elijah all this time? Did he suffer from the drought? See how God provided for him. He told him to go and hide himself by the brook Cherith, and there "ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook." Thus he was fed, perhaps for a whole year. Now the brook dries up; but the prophet must be sustained. He is sent to Zarephath, to a poor widow whom he finds gathering sticks with which to prepare

for herself and child what she supposes will be their last meal. Her language is: "I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." Elijah encouraged her, and was again provided for by miracle; while the drought continued, the meal in the barrel did not waste, and the oil in the cruse did not fail. During this time the son of the widow dies. She seems to think it is the prophet's fault, and is a judgment; but the prophet takes the child to his room, stretches himself upon him, prays for him, and gives him back to his mother alive. Thus the prophet had an opportunity to test God's care of him in the famine, and to prove His readiness to answer prayer. After this occurred the scene on Carmel when the fire descended and licked up the sacrifice, and when the false prophets were slain. It was for his putting these false prophets to death that Jezebel was so angry at Elijah. But why should Elijah fear? Had not God been with him? Did not God feed him by the brook by ravens, and again in the house of the widow in a miraculous manner? Had not God shown His presence and power in the matter of the sacrifice, and vindicated the honor of His own name? Could he have wanted any better evidence that God was with him? And is it not strange that this man, who is spoken of by inspiration as shutting and opening the windows of heaven by prayer, should have been thus cast down, — a man so eminent and able, destined to translation, and mourned for at last as the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof? Is

it possible that Elijah could have shown this weakness? Alas for the strength of man!

Again, secondly, Elijah was discouraged in opposition to *fact*. Hear his bitter complaint; twice he repeats it: "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." See how he emphasizes the "I" — "I only." Now, if it were so, it was not a true ground for discouragement. The Lord and Elijah were a *moral*, if not a *numerical*, majority. At first the Lord did not correct him, but summoned him to come out of his hiding-place and stand upon the mount. Now He sent a wind that rent the mountains and brake the rocks in pieces, then an earthquake, then a fire; but the Lord was in none of these, — He was in the still small voice. Thus the prophet sees that it is not numbers, force, or show that constitute the best ground of hope. But he was mistaken as to fact. Said God: "I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." It was a false impression that Elijah was alone; persecution had hidden these men, but they were there. Thus we find Elijah discouraged on insufficient grounds, and when the knowledge of former interpositions should have kept him up. Alas, Elijah, how weak was thy faith! Experience and fact should have cheered thee, yet thou didst despair and faint!

But do we never repeat Elijah's weakness? Do we not sometimes yield to fear, and flee as if into the

wilderness, and pray that we may die? To you under the juniper-tree the angel comes, saying, "Arise and eat." To you hiding in the dismal cave the voice of God calls, saying, "What doest thou here?" My friends, I come to you with the voice of joy and hope. It is a dark world in which we live, and oftentimes our circumstances are very depressing; but do not think because danger threatens, or losses come, or friends desert, that it is time to die. Do not think because sin abounds, and vice is rampant, and piety declines, that ruin awaits all things. The Lord will preserve His cause, and He will preserve you. The song which I would have you sing is the song of the children, —

"Oh, do not be discouraged,
For Jesus is your friend!
He will give you grace to conquer,
And keep you to the end."

Or that other, —

"Ye valiant soldiers of the cross,
Ye happy praying band,
Though in this world you suffer loss,
You'll reach fair Canaan's land.
Let us never mind the scoffs nor the frowns of the world,
For we've all got the cross to bear;
It will only make the crown the brighter to shine
When we have the crown to wear."

I charge you be of good cheer; I charge you cast aside fear and irresoluteness. Remember, God reigns. As one writes: "Oh, that we were not so impatient when our gracious God occasionally denies our requests! We may rest assured that whenever we pray

without success, that which we desire is not only not best for us, but is either injurious, or at least inferior to what He really intends for us. How many a Christian pilgrim would never have seen anything of the spiritual manna, or of the spiritual streams from the rocks, had God listened to him when, with fear and trembling, he besought Him not to lead him into a desert! Take courage, therefore, my brethren! Believe that the denial which the Lord occasionally puts upon our requests will eventually yield us as abundant cause for praise as the assent with which He at other times graciously crowns them. You may be ready to exclaim, 'O Lord! make an end; it is enough.' But no, beloved brethren, you must first travel, like Elijah, through a desert unto Horeb, that you may there hear the 'still, small voice' of peace."

Moreover, we should be encouraged by God's protection in the past. If we have been in straits, He has brought us out; and if we staggered under burdens, He has made us strong. We have passed through fire, and were not burned, — through waters, and were not drowned. We may have cried out, but the danger passed, and we still live. Now we can look back and say, "There and there I feared; such and such things were grievous;" but no night ever settled that was not followed by a corresponding day. After losses, bereavements, disappointments, trials, the light has dawned. It is probable it will be so still. We are prone to say, "This is the worst thing that ever happened to me;" but very likely we have said this before. We forget in present bitterness the taste of medicine taken long ago. Now, it is safe to reason

from the past. If God has delivered us once, He will deliver us again. Let the knowledge of other sorrows, that lifted themselves like the mists of the morning, encourage you to believe that the vapors of the present will soon clear away.

Further, it does no good to pine, and vex our soul. Elijah received no benefit from his discouragement. When real sorrows come, we may mourn; but it is not well to be sad when there are no grounds for it, and especially when sadness unnerves us for present duties. Besides, sadness is contagious. Children will cry if they see their parents cry, and a sorrowful face will image itself in others. When we yield to fear we make our companions timid, and when we give way to gloom we make all around gloomy. Blessed is the man whose presence carries warmth and sunshine, whose words cheer, and whose face beams with quickening love!

We ought, moreover, to be careful as to the impression we make concerning religion. If we say we have given all we have to God, and then when He takes, or suffers us to lose a little, we rebel and complain, that is inconsistent. If we say religion supports the soul in times of tribulation, and then show that we have no such support, it injures us and dishonors religion. If we say that religion is of priceless value, and then show that it is not worth an empty purse to us, will others want or care to seek it? God must be very angry with those who thus belie and injure His cause.

Again, ought we not to consider that trials may be better for us than what we call blessings? Trials may be blessings in disguise. How foolish we are! We

dote and cherish, we overload our vessel, and would founder at sea, did not the Master cast overboard a portion of the cargo; and then we cry, not knowing that this is for the saving of our souls! Sometimes some object that we idolize becomes positively dangerous to us, and our Father snatches this away, as a mother would snatch a bottle of poison from the hand of her little child who had loosened the cork and was just about to swallow the fatal draught. But what a disappointment it is, and how angry we are at the Hand that thus interferes with our pleasures! Ah! God knows what is best, and all the trials and losses are meant for our good. We say "All these things are against me;" but it is a great mistake. When we get to heaven we may see that prosperity was adversity, and that the trials were the best portion of our earthly lot. We are not to lose sight of the fact that our present life is disciplinary. In the arena of loss and suffering, faith and hope are to be tried. This is the field for the exercise of a life of trust. If there were no suffering there could be no self-sacrifice or opportunities to illustrate the martyr spirit. We are in our rudimentary state, and study and toil and even correction are incidental thereto. The young soldier submits to discipline that he may be the better fitted for the fight; and we are trained here for higher services, successful contests, and at last the conqueror's crown.

Again, it should encourage us that we have so many promises of God. The child ought not to be timid who has his father's hand and hears his voice in the dark. The Bible is to too many a dark-lantern; it

was made to shed light. We ought to go to it in trouble; it would reveal the way, it would dispel our gloom. Hear how it speaks: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Jesus says: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" There is no danger but that we shall live out our appointed time. Let us trust and do good, and we may be sure that we shall be fed. Especially if we can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," may we add, "I shall not want."

Finally, let us remember that our life is short. It is folly for a man to wish to die. We shall die soon enough. Our stay here is but for a "little while." We know that earth is dark and drear, but the morning already dawneth. We ought not to despair when we are getting near home. We are coming where the towers of the Golden City can be seen, and we ought not now to faint by the way. Most of you are more than half through life, and some who are young in years may be almost home. By the shortness of the way, then, I charge you to cheer up; soon, if Christ's, you will be where pain and weariness, disappointments and losses, never come.

"Yet a season, and you know
Happy entrance will be given,
All our sorrows left below,
And earth exchanged for heaven."

I will add only that the secret of all prosperity is in nearness to Christ. When we cleave to Him, nothing

can harm us or cast us down. It is religion that we need more than every earthly good. Let us aim, then, to be more holy, that temporal things may affect us less. Let us pray for larger measures of grace, that we may always walk in the light. And let us rejoice in the Voice that calls us from our gloom, saying, "What doest thou here?" In all times of discouragement let us do as the young student did who was on his way to college, travelling on foot, with all he had tied up in a pocket-handkerchief. He had to go thirty or forty miles. It was in the spring of the year, the day was stormy, and the mud was deep; but when his courage flagged, he roused himself to new exertion and greater endurance by saying to himself: "Sing Windham and go ahead." That was a man who became afterwards a distinguished missionary at the Sandwich Islands. Let us have a like courage; let us be as full of hope, of purpose, and of song; and when our spirits flag in the march of life, hasten our hesitating footsteps by saying, "Sing Windham and go ahead."

"The fearful soul that tires and faints,
And walks the ways of God no more,
Is but esteemed almost a saint,
And makes his own destruction sure."

A LITTLE WHILE.

THE present moment is all we have to do with in any sense. The past is irrecoverable, the future is uncertain ; nor is it fair to burden one moment with the weight of the next. Sufficient unto the moment is the trouble thereof. If we had to walk a hundred miles, we still should have to set but one step at a time ; and this process continued, would infallibly bring us to our journey's end.

JANE TAYLOR.

XVI.

A LITTLE WHILE.

*They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while ?
We cannot tell what He saith. — JOHN xvi. 18.*

JESUS was about to leave the world. He was speaking His last words, but His simple-hearted hearers did not know what He meant. The morrow, however, revealed His meaning, for they beheld Him hanging upon the cross. For three days they saw Him not; having risen from the tomb, He was seen again for forty days, and then He went to His Father. It was literally "a little while," as Jesus had said. But these words may have a wider application. It is but "a little while" that any of us have to stay here on earth. We are seen, and we are not seen, because we go to the Father. We read, "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." "The time is at hand." "Behold, I come quickly."

Let us take the words of the text and dwell on them for a little.

1. We have but "*a little while*" to be. The longest life is included in these few words. To childhood life appears long; but when it is passed, it seems like the flight of an arrow, or like a vapor that vanisheth

away. "Few," said the patriarch Jacob, when he was one hundred and thirty years old, "have the days of the years of my life been." Even the material objects that we see around us are to last much longer than we. The house that we now build for ourselves shall echo to the footfall and prattle of children's children. The tree that we planted by our door shall cast its shadow or drop its fruit when the grass has grown green many times over our graves. This house of God where we meet from Sabbath to Sabbath will stand long after our feet have ceased to frequent it, and our voices have grown silent from its songs of praise. There are structures reared by the hand of man which have stood through many generations. There are works of art still extant that carry us back to the earliest times. How wonderful it seems to look upon a slab from Nineveh, or to hold in our hand a fragment of some ancient ruin, and think of the myriads of human beings that have come and gone since these objects were chiselled and formed! How strange to think that the sun which lights us to-day is the same sun that looked down upon Noah's builders when they made the ark; that the stars which shine in the heavens are the same that fought against Sisera and his host three thousand years ago! And yet, in the sight of God, the sun and the stars exist but a little while. To impress us with the brevity of life the Scriptures use striking figures, such as the morning vapor, the swift post, the flying shuttle. Moreover, Nature is ever lifting her voice and repeating the same lesson. In the flowers that so shortly wither, the sear leaves of autumn, the

speedy succession of night and of winter, she says to us, "Such is thy life." Reason and observation also teach us that our stay here is for "a little while." The companions of our youth, how many of them are gone; and with what rapidity are the friends on every side us passing from our view! It seems as if on all the things beneath and around us the words were written: "A little while." Everything is a loan which the Great Giver is willing we should enjoy for "a little while." Have we children? "These," He says, "I commit to you for a little while." Have we riches, comforts, friends? It is the same with them. Have we honors, offices, influence, power? It is the same with them.

Nor do we fill a large place in the world's history. In a little while we shall be forgotten. "One hundred years from now," wrote Henry Kirke White, "the world will not know that I have ever lived." He was mistaken, but it will be true of us. We may fill a large place now in the hearts of our friends, we may flatter ourselves that we are accomplishing some good, and would be greatly missed if taken away; but it is a small space that we are filling, and when we leave the world the social elements will close up, and things will move on as before. "Thrust your finger," says some one, "into a vessel of water and withdraw it, and you shall see in the returning particles how large a place you fill, and of how much consequence you are in the world." Some seem to think that they are prime factors in the progress of events, and that the world can hardly be reformed or saved without them. They are hardly willing to trust things in the hands of

God after they are gone. But how soon do they pass away, and better men, perhaps, are raised up to take their office! It may be impossible to name a successor to this or that man now, but in the plan of Providence the world has never wanted for the fit person when a crisis came. Says Goethe: "We cannot too soon convince ourselves how easily we may be dispensed with in the world. What important personages we imagine ourselves to be! We think that we alone are the life of the circle in which we move; in our absence we fancy that life, existence, and breath will come to a general pause; and alas! the gap which we leave is scarcely perceptible, so quickly is it filled again, — nay, it is often but the place, if not for something better, at least for something more agreeable." Longfellow writes: —

" When we are gone,
The generation that comes after us
Will have far other thoughts than ours. Our ruins
Will serve to build their palaces or tombs.
They will possess the world that we think ours,
And fashion it far otherwise."

2. If we have but a little while *to be*, we have also but a little while *to do*. It would seem as if the charge to every one in coming into this world were: "What thou doest, do quickly." If life is short, its duties and labors cannot last long; if it is only a day that we spend on earth, all that we do must be done in that day. Reflect, then, — a little while to do! There is much to be done, and the briefer our stay, the more the need of earnest action. Life is in some sense a crisis, and whatever is done must be done now. If

a man is drowning, or a patient sinking, or a vessel foundering, the remedy to be applied must be applied now, or it will be in vain. The fact that a result will be reached in "a little while" in any case, is a reason why the intervening moments should be earnestly filled.

Observe, then, we have but "a little while" in which to honor God. It is our mission here to glorify Him, and in our intercourse with others they should see that we have adopted, as the sentiment of our lives, those words,—the first that Jesus is recorded to have uttered,—*"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"*

Then, further, we have duties to ourselves.

*"A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."*

Even after regeneration there is need of much watching and prayer. The more we examine our hearts, and the larger our experience, the more do we find to do to make our calling and election sure.

Yet again, there is much to do with respect to others. *"None of us liveth to himself."* We are made to be useful; we sustain relations which imply duties; we are to do good to those around us, and must save their souls, if possible, too. We are to live to make the world better; we are to aim to acquaint the ignorant with God's grace in Christ; we must aim to lead up a shining throng to the gates of Paradise with us. With reference to the world lying in sin, with reference to home duties, Christian benevolence,

and personal effort, there is an immense amount of work to do.

It is clear, then, that our hands are full; with reference to God, ourselves, and others we have much to do. But much as we have to do, laborious and important as is our task, it appears that it is to be done in "a little while." The day hastens; the nightfall quickly comes; soon we shall have no more time to work, or work to do.

3. If we have but "a little while" to *be* and to *do*, so we have but "a little while" to *suffer*. Life is a state of discipline; it is "through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom of God." Sharp and numerous are the ills that befall us. Some of us suffer from physical infirmities, and are ever sighing and groaning with pain. Some are loaded with cares and anxieties, and find that mental distresses are hardest to bear. Some do poorly in business, and are threatened with want, or having laid up treasures, lose them. Some are tried by unfaithful friends or ungrateful children; some, when their hearts are most warmly set on companions and loved ones, are called to lay these in the grave. Aptly has the world been likened to a vast hospital, in which every one is crying out with pain. "The whole creation groaneth." Even those who seem most prosperous will admit that they often weep in secret. Every heart knows its own bitterness.

Nor are God's people exceptions; they would seem rather to be most disciplined in the school of sorrow. Thus their faith is strengthened, and they are fitted for the bliss above. It is meant that this should in some

sense be a suffering state, for it is antecedent, when suffering is sanctified, to a life of joy. But connected with this is that other truth that our suffering here is for "a little while." We can sing, with some prospect of release, "I would not live alway." We can anticipate with gladness the time when we shall depart and be with Christ, which is far better. It is this prospect which has cheered many a pilgrim on his way, and supported many a saint on a bed of languishing. They would have given up, but they were cheered in the present trial by the remembrance that it was only for "a little while." So soldiers in a beleaguered fortress will hold out, with the prospect of relief by and by. In the Sepoy rebellion a little band of missionary families and others, cooped up in the city of Lucknow, stood out against the murderous onslaught of the rebels to almost the last point of desperation and despair. They knew that to yield would be to be ravaged and butchered, without mercy or quarter, by men maddened with the spirit of fiends. They might have given up, but they were confident of aid in a little while. But oh, how long the painful moments seemed! At length, when despair was seizing them, the keen ear of one of their number caught the sound of distant music. Up she sprang with the glad cry, "Dinna ye hear it? Dinna ye hear it? It's the Hielanman's slogan! Oh! dinna ye hear it?" How they listened! What an agony of suspense they were in! Hark! they do hear it! The weird music from the pipes of the brave Seventy-eighth reaches them; relief has come; and now, frantic with joy, they throw themselves on the ground, and pour out their hearts in

rapturous praise. Whittier has put this story into verse: —

“ Oh ! they listened, looked, and waited,
Till their hope became despair ;
And the sobs of low bewailing
Filled the pauses of their prayer.
Then up spake a Scottish maiden,
With her ear unto the ground :
‘ Dinna ye hear it ? Dinna ye hear it ?
The pipes o’ Havelock sound ! ’

“ Oh ! they listened, dumb and breathless,
And they caught the sound at last ;
Faint and far beyond the Goomtee
Rose and fell the piper’s blast !
Then a burst of wild thanksgiving
Mingled woman’s voice and man’s :
‘ God be praised ! — the march of Havelock !
The piping of the clans ! ’ ”

It is hope that keeps the heart whole. It is the expectation of deliverance after “a little while” that keeps many a one from sinking in despair. Delightful is it to a soul tormented with the ills of this life, and tortured with the besetments of sin, to hear his Master’s voice, Who comes not only to bring him aid, but to call him home. On many a bed of languishing, in many a weary heart, while there may not be impatience, there is an earnest longing and looking for the coming of the Son of Man. “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” But to him who waits and watches as one watches for the morning, the encouraging language comes: “Be patient;

be of good courage; in 'a little while' Christ will come."

"Yet a season, and you know
Happy entrance will be given,
All our sorrows left below,
And earth exchanged for heaven!"

Cheered by such assurances, the fainting heart is made strong. Yes, it is blessed to feel that these tears are soon to be dried, these sorrows are not to be endured long. On all our painful experiences light breaks, amid our thickest gloom the words shine out, "A little while!"

Now, as we are *to be* only for "a little while," let us plan and act accordingly. Let us build in a humble way. Let us not think of making this world our home. Let us be sober, temperate, moderate. Let us hold loosely to these lower things, knowing that "the time is short."

As we have but a little while *to do*, with reference to God, ourselves, and others, let us be up and doing. The shortness of our stay here, with life's lengthening shadows, demands that we do with our might whatsoever our hand findeth to do. Life is a seed-time; on the diligence of the present the bountifulness of the harvest depends.

As we have but a little while *to suffer*, let us be thankful that our stay here is so short. But "a little while," and the storms of life will be over, and if Christ's, the everlasting recompense of heaven shall be ours. Oh, that we could believe this! Oh, that we might find rest, comfort, sweetness, in the thought! As one writes:—

“ Oh, for the peace which floweth as a river,
Making life's desert places bloom and smile !
Oh, for the faith to grasp heaven's bright ' forever '
Amid the shadows of that ' little while ' !
' A little while ' for patient vigil keeping,
To face the storm, to wrestle with the strong ;
' A little while ' to sow the seed, with weeping,
Then bind the sheaves and sing the harvest-song.

“ ‘ A little while ’ to wear the robe of sadness,
And toil with weary step through miry ways ;
Then to pour forth the fragrant oil of gladness,
And clasp the girdle round the robe of praise.
‘ A little while,’ ’midst shadow and illusion,
To strive, by faith, love's mysteries to spell ;
Then read each dark enigma's bright solution,
And hail sight's verdict, ‘ He doth all things well.’

“ ‘ A little while ’ the earthen pitcher taking
To wayside brooks, from far-off fountains fed ;
Then the cool lip its thirst forever slaking
Beside the fulness of the Fountain-head.
‘ A little while ’ to keep the oil from failing,
‘ A little while ’ faith's flickering lamp to trim ;
And then the Bridegroom's coming footsteps hailing,
To haste to meet Him with the bridal hymn.

“ Thus He who is Himself the gift and giver,
The future glory and the present smile,
With the bright promise of the glad forever
Can light the shadows of the ‘ little while.’ ”

THE
MOTHER OF ZEBEDEE'S CHILDREN.

OF the mother of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux we have the following: Alice was an admirable woman; all the biographies of Bernard unite in giving her the credit of his early education. He was one of a large family of children, all of whom were fed from the bosom of their mother; for she entertained the idea that the infant with the milk it drew from a stranger's bosom imbibed also some portion of the quality and temperament of the nurse, — therefore, while her children were young, they had no attendant but herself.

MRS. ANNA JAMESON.

XVII.

THE MOTHER OF ZEBEDEE'S CHILDREN.

The mother of Zebedee's children. — MATT. xx. 20.

HERE was an ambitious mother who, supposing that Christ had come to establish a temporal kingdom, desired that her two sons should be His chief ministers. Peter, then, could not have been supreme as yet among the apostles.

I call your attention to the expression, "The mother of Zebedee's children." It is not meant that she was their stepmother, for the occasion and the nature of the petition indicate that they were her own sons. The same expression is used elsewhere. We read that at the crucifixion "Many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him: among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and *the mother of Zebedee's children.*"

It has been suggested that possibly Zebedee at this time was dead, or that he was not so constant a follower of Christ as his wife was, and that this may account for the expression. On the other hand, we may suppose that he was distinguished for piety, and that

his own name served better to describe his wife and children. Certainly he was fortunate in having such sons, — sons whom Christ saw fit to call into the apostleship and to make His intimate friends (one of them the “beloved disciple”), the two, with Peter, witnessing the transfiguration, and both, after our Lord’s ascension, spoken of, with Peter, as “pillars” in the Church. They were brought up to labor, and must have honored their father. It is a pleasing fact that when called by Christ they were “in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets.”

What an identity of interest runs through the household! The father’s integrity honors the child, the child’s uprightness honors the father. The name of the one is involved in the honor or the disgrace of the other. “Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.” How frequently, in the Scriptures, are parents’ names mentioned in connection with the honorable or dishonorable acts of their children! The faith of Moses’ parents, the piety of Naomi, mother-in-law of Ruth, the devotedness of Hannah, mother of Samuel, form a part of their children’s history. Nor in the record of the kings of Israel and Judah are the parents’ names omitted. To tell whose child a king was, especially who his mother was, seems as important as to tell what were the chief events of his reign. This is particularly noticeable with reference to the kings of Judah. Hence in very many instances, when the son’s name is mentioned as succeeding his father on the throne, it is added, “His mother’s name was Maacha,” or “Zibiah,” or some other, and “he did

that which was evil," or "that which was good in the sight of the Lord."

In the New Testament, similar examples are furnished. Poor old Simon had to share in the pain and ignominy of his son Judas' betrayal. Much as the father might have wished to conceal the relationship, it was impossible. Faithful history again and again points out the traitor as Judas Iscariot, "the son of Simon." Thus are father and son's names linked in lasting infamy. On the other hand, what an object of pride was Timothy! His unfeigned faith is commended, dwelling first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. From a child he had known the holy Scriptures; and now that he is chosen to the sacred ministry his piety reflects creditably upon his parents, and theirs reflects creditably upon him. I have no doubt Salome was proud to be called the "mother of Zebedee's children." Like the Roman mother, she could say, "These are my jewels!"

And does not the same law of common interest or of reflected honor or disgrace between parents and children obtain at the present day? Nay, does it not belong to the family relation? What can raise one's proud "pretensions" higher, or give better ground for boasting, than to be

"The son of parents passed into the skies?"

And what can impart more comfort to parents than to see their children occupying honorable and useful positions in life? I am pleased to see that there are business houses where the name of a deceased father is retained in the name of the firm. You now and then

meet with advertisements in which the language is not "late firm of," or "successors to," but such a man's "sons." The father has long since ceased from the interests of earth, but his name and reputation are the best advertisement his sons can have. There is no need for their names to appear; it is enough to say that they are that man's "sons."

A well-known statesman in a public address said: "A few years ago I stood where the Potomac in silence rolls its waters. Upon its banks I saw, not the stately mausoleum, but in simple elegance the humble sepulchre of one whom the world delights to honor. In a sarcophagus of white marble — pure as the character of him whom it commemorates — repose the ashes of him whose memory is immortal. No labored epitaph extols the virtues of him whose dust is there preserved, but a single word inscribed upon that stone tells a tale of fame and glory. It is the name of 'Washington.' In an humble graveyard, some miles distant from that tomb, rest the ashes of a mother, — an American mother, a Christian mother. On the marble above her remains is an inscription simple but eloquent, — language that thrills the heart, — none other need be uttered, — women of America, hear it! — 'Mary, the mother of Washington!'"

Some years ago two fathers went from New York city to visit their sons, but with feelings and in circumstances widely different. One had had the satisfaction of seeing his son elected to the chief magistracy of the State, and upon going to the capital was received with pleasure and pride into the executive mansion. The other was summoned to the capital

of the nation to see, with agony, his son confined within the walls of a prison, his hands stained with the blood of his fellow-man.

Oh, how truly may children be a source of unspeakable joy or of grief to those who gave them being! Some cause their parents to look upon and speak of them with pride; others bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. It is a true saying that children cause the highest pleasure or the sharpest pain. Alas, that so many young persons go astray! How many homes are blighted! How does the discovery of one dead body bring out hundreds of parents to see if it is not the body of their missing child! Says a writer: "The very air is poisoned in which our children live. No legislation, no single reform can touch this disease, any more than it could cure the malaria which slays its victims by the thousand. It is for each family, each clergyman, each mother, to clean and sweeten their own household."

You ask now, How is this to be done?

1. I reply first, by teaching your children *habits of obedience*. Everything depends on this. It is a Divine command: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." One of the objects of the family is that children may learn submission to authority while young. Nor is it to be expected that this lesson, if it be not learned under the paternal roof, will be learned afterwards. The lawless child grows up to be an outlaw in society and a rebel against God. It is one great step towards the conversion of a child

when it has learned obedience to parents. Besides the precept, much is said in the Scriptures on this subject. Under the Jewish law the child that should smite or curse his father or his mother was to be put to death. Still further, it is written, "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother . . . bring him . . . unto the gate of his place; . . . and all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die." Again it is written: "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother;" and again: "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." Take the example of sons that came to a bad end,—the sons of Eli, the sons of David,—and you find it was in connection with parental neglect; or take such examples as the world is constantly furnishing, and you find, on the one hand, children that are taught submission come to usefulness and honor, while on the other, children that are suffered to have their own way grow up to be a curse to their parents and to the world. It is as true to-day as it ever was, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Count not, then, parents, upon coming satisfaction with your children if you are not restraining them as you ought. A disobedient child is a hopeless child. You may flatter yourself that by some turn of fortune he will be brought to his senses; but it is a frail hope. As soon might one who sees an abandoned vessel driv-

ing upon the rocks hope that by and by the wind will vere, and that somehow ship and cargo will yet come safely into port. No! you must seize the rudder now. The more furiously the storm drives, the more need of instant action. Tax all your strength and wisdom, and guide that young nature with its mistaken notions and ardent propensities into a wider and safer sea. To fail now is to make shipwreck of your child and of all the hopes and comforts that you have stored in him. It is a notorious fact that the present age is one in which the children rule instead of the parents, and to what this is leading no mind can divine. It is making families discordant, destroying respect for authority, and opening the door to outlawry in the State. Many parents are weaving thorns in their own pillows. The parental relation is a sacred one; it involves fearful responsibilities, and no man is worthy to be intrusted with the care of a child who does not maintain in his family discipline and order. It was said of Abraham: "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him."

2. Again, if you would find pleasure in your children you should bring them up to *habits of industry*. Children must be kept employed. Nothing is truer than the lines, —

"For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do."

A habit of industry secured in early life will go with one into riper years. It will keep a youth from bad company, where vice is strengthened and evil is concocted. It will prevent the formation of bad habits,

which stupefy the conscience, break down social and moral restraints, and lead him off into shameful and ruinous courses. It will give a healthy tone to his system, inspire to vigorous effort, and impart courage to the attainment of high and laudable ends. It will teach the economy of time, by which many precious moments will be rescued for the acquisition of knowledge and the culture of the mind. It will enable him to do for himself or for the world whatever his talents and ambition may qualify him to do. The men who have written the most largely, or wrought out some permanent good to society, or succeeded in any sphere of life, have been commonly men of industrious habits. The sluggard is not the man to whom either health, wealth, or honor is likely to come. He is but a drone in society, — an idler living upon other men's labors. It were well if the apostolic injunction could be put in force, "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat." When we look at the amount of labor which some men have put forth, we cannot but bless God for the men, their industry and their labors.

The early history of this country furnishes some notable instances of distinction coupled with industry, — men of whom their parents might well be proud. Roger Sherman in his early apprentice days was laying the foundation for his subsequent greatness; for instead of joining in idle conversation he kept a book at hand, and devoted every possible moment to study. Benjamin Franklin was another who filled with some useful occupation every instant of time. "With the early morn he rose, and with the stars he watched." The same was true of the Philadelphia pastor and

commentator, the late Albert Barnes. The secret of his having written sixteen volumes of notes on the Old and New Testaments, in addition to the labors of a large pastoral charge, he explains by quoting the reply of an old writer: "It is to be accounted for by the difference between seven and nine o'clock." Those sixteen volumes, he tells us, were all written before nine o'clock in the morning, and were the fruit of the habit of rising between four and five. Thus it appears what a diligent use of the morning hours may accomplish.

Nor was it from idlers that Christ chose His apostles. He did not look up in the market-place men that were waiting for a call. He sought out rather those that had a pursuit, and were busy in it. Andrew and Peter were in the act of fishing. James and John were mending their nets. Matthew was sitting at the receipt of customs. Philip, the ancient commentators think, is the one who at His call replied, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." Bartholomew, who is commonly thought to be the same as Nathanael, was called from under the fig-tree, engaged, it would seem, in meditation and prayer. All had something to do and something to leave. "Lo, we have left all," said Peter, "and followed Thee." There are calls at the present day, — calls for earnest men in all the departments of thought and action. In the Church and in the State, in literature, in science, and in art, in the strife for wealth, in grand exploit and brilliant discovery, in the search for truth, in the investigation of principles, in the application of knowledge, in the amelioration of society, in the advancement of reform, in everything

worthy of man's effort, there is room, — room, not for idlers, but for true men; men who love to work, and who will make their mark upon the age. It is such that the world seeks; it is only such that it will honor.

3. Again, give to your children *the advantages of the Sabbath-school*. This is an institution that God has greatly blessed. The adoption of uniform lessons has added to its usefulness. It has advantages in the early period in which it addresses the heart, in the closer access to the young which it furnishes, in its methods of instruction, and in its reflex influence upon those who teach.

The Sabbath-school is properly called the "nursery of the Church." Here revivals of religion often commence. Here the new recruits for the Lord's army are raised up. One important benefit which the Sabbath-school, as a national institution, is working, is in its receiving and assimilating the crude material that comes to us from foreign lands. Many immigrants to this country bring with them qualities that may well excite alarm. Some are ignorant and vicious; some are educated and godless; some are hostile to our institutions and laws. These people must be evangelized, or they will cause us trouble. Many agencies are at work, and much is being done to save and utilize these foreign elements. The Sabbath-school addresses the children, and through these many parents are reached. In the large cities many Jewish children are thus won to the Saviour. At a Sabbath-school teachers' convention a delegate from the Five Points' Mission in New York city, in speaking of the different elements in his school, and of the work

required, said: "We have in our school between thirty and forty Jewish children; and since our school commenced, over thirty of these children have received a reward of a Bible for committing to memory the Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount, — that Saviour whom their fathers crucified. Last Sabbath morning, when I had closed my sermon, I turned to the children and asked, 'What shall we sing?' One beautiful child, a bright-eyed, black-haired little Jewess about thirteen, replied immediately, "Sing, —

" 'Alas! and did my Saviour bleed,
And did my Sovereign die?'

And before any others had commenced, she, with a sweet voice, had begun the hymn. Let me say that from the commencement of our work the blessing of God has been manifested and poured out in an especial manner. While I am here as a delegate from that mission I have left my assistant to pray with and over and for eight or ten of those Sabbath-school children who last Sunday night at our meeting arose in the congregation and said, with tears trickling down their cheeks, 'Pray for us.' " This is but a specimen of what the Sabbath-school is doing for the millions of children of all classes in our country. Give it the widest possible encouragement, then; smile upon the detachment of this great army that exists here among yourselves. Be solicitous that your children attend the school, and are regularly in their place, with the lesson learned. Be either a teacher or a scholar yourself. That is a good way to keep children in the school. See that the library is ample, and is constantly replenished.

Grudge no money and spare no pains to make the school in all respects what it should be. You may be sure that a blessing is in it, and if you do your duty, you may expect that a share in that blessing will come to your family and to yourself.

4. Finally, see that your children have *religious instruction at home*. The Sabbath-school was never designed to supersede the family. You are chargeable with great folly and great guilt if you neglect your children on the plea that they are instructed in the Sabbath-school. That is a valuable aid, but can never be a substitute. Sabbath-school instruction, though it be faithfully given, is but a moiety of the instruction that they should receive. How frequently and seriously were the Jews charged to make their children familiar with the statutes, judgments, and miraculous works of God! "Ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates." If parents observed this command in its spirit at the present day, I am sure that they would oftener see their children converted, and derive satisfaction and honor from their useful lives. Said Dr. James Hamilton, "Those of you who are best acquainted with the world, or who have read most extensively the histories of men, will allow that in the formation of character the most telling influence is the early home. It is that home which often in boyhood has formed beforehand our most famous scholars, our most celebrated heroes, our most devoted missionaries; and even when men

have grown up reckless and reprobate, and have broken all restraints, human and divine, the last anchor which has dragged, the last cable they have been able to snap, is the memory which moored them to a virtuous home."

Notwithstanding the revived interest in Sabbath-school instruction, there is reason to believe that family religion has declined very much of late. The family altar is thrown down in many a household, or has never been set up. The word of God is not studied, expounded, or enforced in the home circles with the devoutness and interest that characterized the former generation, and the consequence is that the children are growing up to "cast off fear and restrain prayer." In some places boarding-house or hotel life is exerting a bad influence, encouraging luxury, indolence, and gayety, and taking away from that sacred word "home" all that gives it sweetness, pathos, and power. Children reared in such circumstances almost necessarily become selfish, idle, and vicious. I am sure that our homes must be reclaimed for Christ before the children that come from them shall honor us or bless the world. When there is more of the religious element infused into them; when prayer and singing and Scripture-reading and familiar instruction and words of love and a correct example are the true indices of a Christian household, — then we may expect to see coming from them sons and daughters whose virtue and worth shall add to the honor of the parents, and embalm in grateful recollection their own names.

YOUNG MEN STRONG.

YOUNG man or woman, this is the day of hope to you. All your best opportunities are still before you. Now, too, you are laying your plans for the future. Why not lay them in God? Who has planned for you as wisely and faithfully as He? Let your life begin with Him. Believe that you are girded by your God for a holy and great calling. Go to Him and consecrate your life to Him, knowing assuredly that He will lead you into just that life which is your highest honor and blessing.

HORACE BUSHNELL.

XVIII.

YOUNG MEN STRONG.

I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong. —

I JOHN ii. 14.

YOUNG men have prominence in the Scriptures. Numerous precepts are addressed to them, and in many of the narratives and incidents they have a conspicuous part. The three hundred and eighteen trained servants whom Abram led forth to rescue Lot were young men. It was young men, it would seem, who were sent as spies into the land of Canaan. Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, and Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim, took the lead, and they lived to see the forty years' march completed. The two spies who were sent into the city of Jericho were young men. In the wars of David young men bore an active part. It was by taking the counsel of unprincipled young men that Rehoboam rent his kingdom and was left with but two tribes. It was by young men, princes of the provinces, that Ahab defeated with great slaughter Ben-hadad, king of Syria, and his leagued army. Young men were of the number, if not in the majority, of those who apprehended the Saviour in the garden.

"There followed Him a certain young man." "And the young men laid hold on Him." It was young men who took up the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira, and carrying them out, buried them. What a record have we also of individual young men! How interesting the story of Isaac! How spotless and beautiful the life of Joseph! How remarkable the elevation of David! What womanly sweetness in the love of Jonathan! What determination in Daniel! How marked the piety and resolution of his three companions! How touching the story of the young man whom Jesus gave back to his mother at the gates of Nain! How remarkable the history of the young man who stood by consenting, and kept the raiment of them that stoned Stephen!

I. In the text the apostle says: "I have written unto you, young men, *because ye are strong.*" Young men are always strong; they are strong because they are young men.

I. They are strong in *hope*. They have not found by experience that earthly hopes —

"Resemble much the sun,
That, rising and declining, casts large shadows;
But when his beams are dressed in midday brightness,
Yields none at all."

As the arrow when it leaves the bow starts with greatest velocity, so there is needed at the beginning of life a propulsion that shall carry one through adverse circumstances to the subsidence and rest of old age.

"Congenial hope, thy passion-kindling power
How bright, how strong, in youth's untroubled hour!"

2. Young men are strong in *courage*. Hopeful, not knowing defeat, conscious of physical strength, and feeling the impulses of an ardent nature, what else can they be? This is true particularly with regard to physical courage; and if the impulses be sanctified, it is true also with regard to moral courage. To dare is a characteristic of youth. Indeed, the tendency is to too great boldness, the want of knowledge leading to want of fear. But ordinarily it is among the young that you find the brave. The armies of the world have been made up of young men. It is the flower of a nation that goes forth to maintain its rights or redeem its honor, and sometimes at deadly cost. Many military leaders fought their hardest battles and won their highest honors before they turned the period of youth. This statement is given: "Alexander the Great won a name at the age of eighteen, had conquered the world before he was twenty-five, and died at thirty-two. Julius Cæsar greatly distinguished himself before he was twenty-two. Hannibal was made commander-in-chief at twenty-six. Charlemagne was crowned king at twenty-nine, having made himself master of France and the greater part of Germany. Scipio Africanus the elder attained his greatest renown at twenty-nine, Scipio Africanus the younger at twenty-six; Philip of Macedon at twenty-five; Peter the Great at thirty; Charles XII. at twenty-four; Frederick the Great at thirty; Napoleon at twenty-six; Marshal Soult at twenty-nine; and many of Napoleon's great marshals before the age of thirty-five." In our civil war the average age of the officers of the United States army was only thirty-

five years, and that of the entire body of soldiery only twenty-four.

3. Young men are strong *to execute*. They not only *dare*, but *do*. Hope and courage culminate in realization. Great achievements generally spring from a vigorous brain and a stalwart arm. Whatever one distinguishes himself in, wherever he wins his highest honors, not simply on the field of battle, but on that of letters, science, or art, he usually, like the military chieftain, makes his mark and gains his highest successes young. Not that there are no exceptions; not that a gifted mind may not sometimes rise above its earlier efforts, — but usually the greatest productions originate in an early ripeness, and not in an over-maturity of years. Poets, painters, and orators have often, if not commonly, like soldiers, won their highest honors young. Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope" was written at the age of twenty-one; Milton's "L' Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and "Comus," at twenty-four, leading to the remark, "Had he never even written 'Paradise Lost,' these pieces must have stamped him a poet in the most elevated sense of the word." Pope's "Essay on Criticism" was written at the age of twenty, and "displays," says Dr. Johnson, "such extent of comprehension, such variety of distinction, such acquaintance with mankind, and such knowledge both of ancient and modern learning as are not often attained by the maturest age and the longest experience."

Especially are young men strong to execute physically. Who are the pioneers of civilization; who level the forests; who build new cities and people new

States? Young men. Go to any of those new settlements at the West, and how few old men do you find there! Everything bears the freshness, glow, and energy of youth. Thus and variously is illustrated the Divine statement, "The glory of young men is their strength."

II. We have seen why the apostle wrote to young men, — because *they are strong*. Now notice the *obligations of strength*. Strength implies duties. Parents must lay up for children; the big boy in the street must defend the one who is smaller and weaker. If there be then this mighty reserve of power in young men, what are we to expect them to do?

I. Young men *should consecrate themselves to God*. It was to such as had done this that the apostle wrote: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and *the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*" Clearly where there is so much strength abiding, the word of God should abide also, and that strength, directed and intensified by the word of God, should find an object in overcoming the wicked one. Oh, what a spectacle is a noble, high-purposed Christian young man! With what an interest do angels gaze upon him, and how do the hearts of all who love the cause of God and of truth in the world warm towards him! He is one in whom are lodged divine energies, who is to be a moving power in the world, to draw after him the freighted interests and hopes of men. I may not now speak of the *claims* of God upon young men, Who says to each, "My son, give Me thine heart;" nor of the greater ease with which an interest in the grace of Christ may

be sought and obtained in youth; nor may I turn aside to consider the advantages to one's self of consecrated powers, the satisfaction and peace and heavenly rewards that follow, — I look out rather upon the world itself, and then, turning to young men, say, "Where there is so much strength, it ought to be turned to good account." Just as one might stand at Niagara and say, "What an energy is here, and how useful it might be if it were only employed!" Niagara is grander in its wild waste of power than if its course were lined with factories whose rattling wheels should rival the water's roar. But it is not so with young men. In them all waste of power is displeasing to the eye and painful to the heart of every one who beholds it. Hence I say the strength they possess should be early consecrated, and so turned into legitimate channels. Power not consecrated is power to do evil, and will be so employed. Not like Niagara, mighty, yet restrained within its own limits, will such power be, but like Niagara overflowing its banks and sweeping everything to awful ruin. Reflect for a moment on the difference between a converted and an unconverted young man. Had the philosophy of Hume, the genius of Byron, and the penetration of Voltaire been consecrated, who can estimate the good which these men might have done; while the mischief that they have wrought and occasioned would have been averted! To prevent evil is well; but if energies and powers can be turned to account and made positively efficient for good, it is better. The stream that overspreads fruitful fields, and occasions great destruction of property and even of human life, were

well mastered if it could only be turned into legitimate channels and made to find its way peacefully to the sea. But it were a greater triumph if at the same time it could be made an instrument of good, and compelled as it rolls along to turn wheel after wheel, and cause mill and factory to hum with the music of busy days and of useful work. The converted youth is like such a stream.

There are two respects in which early piety has to do with increased usefulness. First, a better character will be formed where a beginning is made soon. By a complete education every faculty may be developed and brought into use, good habits too may be formed, and higher qualifications for usefulness generally be secured. But beyond this, it is evident if this power be not appropriated soon, the opportunity will pass, and he who might be an instrument of good will fail of this, because not brought into active use. Youth is not a mill-site which we may build upon when we will, but a power which the irreligious and secular world says, "You must appropriate at once, or I will."

2. A second obligation resting upon young men is *to know their strength*. "Know thyself" is a general and important precept. But if there be any class to whom this may be addressed with special fitness, that class is young men. Nor is there any part or quality of themselves that they should better appreciate or understand than their strength. Consciousness of power must precede the use of power, else that power is but a latent force, or will be exerted in a baleful manner. If a man is placed in charge of an engine and does not know whether the power it possesses is

represented by five or fifty, it is evident that he is not fit for his post, and that the danger is imminent so long as he is in it. So some young men manifest a like incompetence to manage themselves, never approaching the limits of their power; or, on the other hand, subjecting themselves to a pressure which overcomes and destroys them.

I say to you then, young men, know yourselves; know your strength; understand that you are at the most critical, eventful, hopeful period of your history. Realize that you are young men, and that immense capabilities are wrapped up in you. If ever I am inclined to groan, it is when I see a young man staggering towards me, the victim of low passions, his future blighted, his strength stolen, his character a wreck. If it moves the heart to look on some magnificent ruin, or to see a great ship tossed and broken by the tempest, much more does it touch our sensibilities to see a young man,—grander in his creation than any structure that human hands have perfected,—thus brought low by sinful pleasures, and ruined for all time.

3. It is an obligation of strength that it shall be earnestly and usefully employed. To be known and consecrated implies this; and yet there is much consecration that is partial, formal, and fruitless, and much consciousness or recognition of power that turns that power into selfish and unworthy channels. Were half the strength employed by young men in amassing wealth or acquiring fame, devoted to the building up of Christ's kingdom, the world would soon be evangelized and redeemed. Strength is a possession for which

each man is accountable. Like every other talent, the charge with respect to it is, "Occupy till I come." The opportunities for usefulness are all that an earnest heart could wish. In town and country there is a call for helpers, and none can do more or better than young men. The organization of Young Men's Christian Associations, and more recently of Societies of Christian Endeavor, is one of the hopeful signs of the times. Nor are women excluded from having a share in the great work of bringing the world to Christ. Paul speaks of the noble band of women who labored with him in the Gospel; and in our day there has been a wonderful enlargement of woman's work. Thus by manhood's strength, and woman's gentleness and love, the various departments of Christian effort are successfully filled. God bless those who, conscious of their gentler power, are consecrating it with their brothers' strength upon the same altar; nor let any one think his task too hard, or faint in a work so blessed.

"O favored one ! thy cross press closer to thee,
With humble thanks for that He thinks thee worthy
E'en to taste His cup and in His baptism share,
And for a little while His blood-stained cross to bear !
Soon Jesus' welcome summons thou shalt hear,
'Rise, let us go hence !' Then stayed the falling tear,
Low at His feet thy cross thou shalt lay down,
And from His hand receive the eternal crown."

FAMILY RELIGION.

REALLY it is disgraceful that men are so ill-taught and unprepared for social life as they are, often turning their best energies, their acquisitions, and their special advantages into means of annoyance to those with whom they live. Some day it will be found out that to bring up a man with a genial nature, a good temper, and a happy form of mind is a greater effort than to perfect him in much knowledge and many accomplishments.

ARTHUR HELPS.

XIX.

FAMILY RELIGION: ITS HINDRANCES, BLESSINGS, AND METHODS.

God setteth the solitary in families. — PSALM lxviii. 6.

THE Family was the first Divine institution; then followed the Church, and then the State. The family is the foundation of the other two, and the three are the foundation of society. Out of the family the Church is reinforced, and when the family becomes corrupt the State perishes.

I. The *hindrances* to family religion are many.

1. Marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. Some persons are opposed to such marriages both from reason and Scripture. A conscientious clergyman refused to officiate at such marriages, and published a book on the subject in defence of his views. I think he strained the point, and did not rightly interpret the passage: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." But when you come to family religion, it is manifest that if one of the parents has religion, and the other has not, there must be less of it. Christian mothers have said to me, "It is hard work to bring up my children alone; my husband is a good man, he is kind, provides well for his family, but

he does not help me religiously. All the praying and teaching I have to do alone." I should be afraid to have for a husband a man who would not pray with me and for his children; and I should be afraid to have for the mother of my children a woman who was not daily lifting her heart to God, and teaching my children to do the same. It is a great hindrance to family religion if either refuses to come out as a Christian, and does not live a life of prayer.

2. The absence of a family altar is a hindrance to family religion. One of the first articles that a young married couple should set up in their dwelling is a family altar. Think of children never hearing their father's voice in prayer! How discouraging to them to pray and to join the Church! There are parents who stand in the way of their children's salvation. The long, formal prayer is not called for; but a family service in which all unite is a happy beginning of each day, benign in its influence and lasting in its impression.

3. The neglect of infant consecration is a hindrance to family religion. A child given to God and trained for God is more likely to become a Christian than one not thus consecrated. Christian parents will be faithful without vows; but when vows are made, it is likely that they will be remembered, and excite to greater fidelity.

4. The neglect of catechetical instruction is a hindrance to family religion. The old methods may pass, but truth and the human heart remain the same. The need of faithful religious instruction must always continue, and where such instruction is furnished, good

results follow. It is not necessary to teach the Catechism in a hard, dry way, to get the good of it. If parents relished it, their children would find sweetness in it too.

5. The Sunday-school is not at fault, but some persons are at fault by the way they use it. It was originated for those who had not Christian parents to instruct them. Now, some Christian parents delegate to the teachers duties belonging to themselves. They are perhaps teachers, and are too tired to give additional instruction to their own children at home. In some places children are kept from the preaching services, and are made to think that the Sunday-school is enough for them. They miss the more impressive exercises of public worship; and when they have outgrown the Sunday-school, they lose their interest in the Church. With the study of undenominational lessons, too, they have widened, but not intensified, their beliefs.

6. Hotel life is a hindrance to family religion. Persons who have not the liberties of their own dwelling can hardly rear children as they should be reared. Children can have no correct idea of a home if they have never lived in one. Wealth has created in many instances summer and winter homes; but if each home is well furnished, it becomes but half a home, and if one is only a staying place, it is no home at all. Persons who spend months in two places, with two churches and Sunday-schools to sustain, half interested in both, giving to and working for both, will hardly find their experience promotive of personal or family religion. Dr. John Hall has written a book for

the American Sunday-school Union, entitled, "A Christian Home." In this he says: "It is good, if possible, to be in a home, not a boarding-house nor a hotel. It may be 'love in a cottage,' and it may be humble; but it is commonly better adapted to the growth of a true, pure, simple life than 'rooms' in one of those non-military barracks which the needs of our great cities are supposed to demand. We adhere to the conviction that a modest, self-contained dwelling is morally more healthy, more conducive to permanent happiness, more likely to have its 'grace before meat,' its family altar, and its practical prudence in management, than the 'nicest apartments' in the most attractive hotel."

7. A faulty example is a hindrance to family religion. You may have a home and religious instruction; but children are keen observers, and actions speak louder than words. Prayer, Bible, and Catechism cannot atone for a faulty life.

8. The spirit of the age is in some respects at variance with family religion. The railroads interfere with family altars. Places of amusement vie with prayer-meetings. Social customs supplant the strict etiquette of former times. Business is too driving to allow fathers to give much attention to their families, and fashion is too absorbing to allow mothers to nurse and train their own children. Whatever keeps a father from his home is an irreparable loss to his family, and a hired nurse is the poorest substitute for a mother. Men cannot get time to say prayers in the morning, and Sundays they must give to sleep. Women must dress and move in the social world, and children must not stand in the way.

Thus I have sought to suggest, without discussing, some of the hindrances to family religion.

Let us notice the second point.

II. The *blessings* of family religion.

1. It is a blessing to be born into a Christian household. We cannot choose, but if we are in a godly line, we ought to be thankful. It puts us within the reach of promises; it places us where a current of prayer descends upon us; it sets our faces in the direction of an on-going good. If we are not in such a line, we ought to start one, and pray for those in that line who shall come after us. "My son," said a father to his child, "you were prayed for a hundred years ago." Ought we not to bless God for such prayers, and for the fathers and mothers who offered them? You recall Cowper's lines at seeing his mother's picture: —

"My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth,
But higher far my proud pretensions rise, —
The son of parents passed into the skies."

2. It is a blessing to live in such a family, to breathe its air, to share its ministries, to feel its influence. Home is sanctuary and Eden; but it is not a real paradise with Christ not in it. When husband and wife can kneel together and pray, and when the dear lambs are the objects of a like solicitude, and a common love knits all, the earth-type of heaven comes nearest to be seen. What a magnificent description of such a family have we in "The Cotter's Saturday Night:" —

“The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request
That He, who stills the raven’s clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide,
But chiefly in their hearts with grace Divine preside.”

3. The memory of such a home is blessed. Some of us have such memories, and the tears fill our eyes. The American Tract Society has published the letter that the Rev. William Goodell wrote to his brother from Constantinople after the death of their father. Of the old rocky farm on a Vermont hillside he says: “If it were not all ploughed over, it was, I am confident, almost every foot of it prayed over.” And of the humble dwelling he writes: “There our godly father prayed for us with all prayer and supplication in the spirit; there, on every Sabbath eve, he asked us those solemn, important, and all-comprehensive questions from the Catechism; and there, with eyes and heart raised to heaven, we used to sing, to the tune of Old Rochester, —

“‘God, my Supporter and my Hope.’

And there, too, our mother, of precious memory, lived a life of poverty, patience, meekness, and faith. There she used to sit and card her wool by the light of the pine-knot, and sing to us those sweet words, —

“‘Hovering among the leaves there stands
The sweet celestial Dove;
And Jesus on the branches hangs
The banner of His love.’

“And there, too, we assembled early one morning in her little bedroom to see her die. Her peace was like a river. She was full of triumph, and she was able to address to us words of heavenly consolation till she had actually crossed over into shallow water, within one minute of the opposite banks of the Jordan, heaven and all its glories full in view. It is a rare privilege we have all enjoyed in being descended from such parents. They were the children of the Great King; they belonged to the royal family; their names were on the catalogues of princes and of those that live forever; they daily walked abroad with the conscious dignity of heirs to a great estate, even an incorruptible inheritance; and they have now gone to sit down with Christ on His throne.”

4. Christian homes are blessed because out of them good men come. Children trained for God are more likely to become the servants of God. Men who are going to do much for God must be converted young. The household is the hotbed in which the plants of righteousness get their start. Sometimes the dwelling may be the abode of poverty; but if the home of piety, it may make the best offerings to the Church. The home of William Goodell was a very humble one; James King and Claudius Buchanan were poor boys; Zwingle came from a shepherd's cabin; Melancthon from an armorer's workshop; and Martin Luther from a miner's cottage.

We reach now the third point.

III. *Methods* of family religion. There must be some methods, — good methods, or bad methods. A family is a little government, and there is order there,

or anarchy. It is evident that there are no patent right methods for training a household. The main factors in a Christian home are piety and common-sense. The methods will be such as these suggest.

You ask, How shall I make mine an ideal Christian home? I do not know; but this is what I think with regard to every home: —

1. The government should be shared by husband and wife together. It is a sorry state of things when the child can appeal from the decision of the father or mother, as to a higher court, and get the other parent's decision repealed.

2. All deceits should be ruled out. Never tell a child that the medicine is good, and make believe take it, and cheat him with a bitter draught. Never say, "Don't you tell your father;" "Keep this from your mother;" and make the child a party to a secret between himself and you. Have no family secrets; affect no mysterious airs; take the child into your councils; when you can, tell him all. Do not resort to tricks to save his tears; do not feign things; do not lie to him by word or conduct. If you wish to go out, and he cannot go, tell him so; do not slip away. If you cheat your child, as soon as he is older he will cheat you. If you have secrets that you keep from him, he will have secrets that he will keep from you.

3. Do not frighten your child into falsehood; do not accuse or put questions that create a temptation; reach your point by indirections, and be calm and serious, without temper; do not excite and make matters worse which you are trying to mend; never seem

to doubt a child's word; always drink everything in with entire simplicity. Trust him; it will make him feel that he must be worthy of trust.

4. Punishment in a Christian family is not a particularly solemn or religious act. Some parents of extraordinary piety may mingle with it prayers and tears; but ordinarily the offence should be properly noticed, with kindness and decision, and then given to the past. Punishment that says, "To-morrow, at such a time, we will meet and pray, and then I shall give you a whipping," is too cold-blooded for a Christian home. Nor should punishment be irregular, uncertain, or ill-proportioned. If you have paroxysms, do not show them in punishing, using a stick at one time and a straw at another for the same offence.

5. Know whether your child is a man or a boy. Do not belittle him. Talk with him, draw him out, show respect for his opinions. Especially be free to enlighten him with regard to things that he ought to know. Do not send him to vile companions or bad books for information that opening manhood naturally and curiously seeks. Let a father's and a mother's love sanctify the most delicate lessons.

6. Watch for opportunities to introduce religious themes pleasantly. Do not make the Sunday lesson in Bible or Catechism distasteful. Do not overdose with moral instruction. If you want your son to become a minister, do not be continually talking about it to him or in his presence. There is wonderful significance in what is said of Mary: "She kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." I know a mother who was disappointed in her earnest desire

that her son should be a minister, as it seemed to me, because she talked too much about it.

7. If anything unpleasant is to be done, do not ask a child to do it, but do it yourself, — at least do a part of it. Always show consideration for a child's strength, feelings, circumstances. Do not forget that you were once a child. Do not fortify a child by telling him it is good to bear the yoke in his youth, or tease him with moral platitudes. "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath."

8. Keep your children at home till their characters are sufficiently strong, and never place them under godless teachers.

9. Make Sunday a pleasant day. Let it be the field-day of the week. You need not secularize it, but you can have some extra sweets prepared for it. You can make it the day of song, of good reading, and of loving fellowship. The family day ought to be the sweetest of the seven. Let the large Bible with pictures now do its best service for the little ones. Let the Catechism have its place, but do not try to teach it all in one Sunday. Break the truth into crumbs, and be as steady as the growing years of childhood. A college boy once spent a June Sabbath in the home of a wealthy Christian layman. It was a day to be remembered. In the afternoon there was the clever fatherly talk, — better than a sermon, — and, with other ministries, the preparing of bouquets to go next morning to the hospital and to the homes of the poor in the great city. Family religion ought to grow on Sunday like plants enjoying an exceptionally fine day of rain and sun.

10. Live for your family. You can do most for the world by doing most for your family. You will be happy, too, in proportion as you are identified with your household. A man's business is his family, and his daily toils are but the chores. I would say that the original law relating to the husband is that he shall be with his family as much as possible at all times, but especially at the close of the day's work and on Sundays. Clubs and lounging places interfere with family religion. A man has no right to neglect his family even for the public good. It is said of the philanthropist Wilberforce that once, in attempting to take his child from the nurse's arms, it shrank away and cried. "Oh, sir!" said the nurse, "the child is afraid of strangers." This struck the father, and he resolved that he would no longer be a stranger in his own household. I believe that one reason why the sons of clergymen and others sometimes go astray is because the fathers are too much absorbed in outside cares and work.

11. Labor for and expect the conversion of your children while they are young. This is the objective point. What is so important as this? To this all the laws and methods of family religion converge.

To every mother God says, "Take this child and nurse it for Me." And every father ought to feel that as he is responsible for the child's being, he must do his utmost to secure its salvation, and to cause its life to be honoring to God and useful to humanity. It is appalling to see how little sense of responsibility some parents feel. There are children who want to come to Christ, but their fathers and

mothers stand in the way. We are told that "among the old Romans there prevailed the touching custom of holding the face of every new-born infant towards the heavens, signifying, by thus presenting its forehead to the stars, that it was to look above the world into celestial glories. It was a vague superstition; but Christianity dispels the false, and gives us a clear realization of that pagan yearning in the deep solicitude which all its disciples cherish for the spiritual welfare of the young."

THE ARK IN THE HOUSE.

FOR one, I care but little for the government which presides at Washington in comparison with the government which rules the eight or ten millions of American homes. No administration can seriously harm us if our home-life is pure, frugal, and godly. No statesmanship or legislation can save us, if once our homes become the abodes of ignorance or the nestling-places of profligacy. The home rules the nation.

THEODORE L. CUYLER.

XX.

THE ARK IN THE HOUSE.

And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household. — 2 SAM. vi. 11.

THE ark of the covenant was the sacred chest, or coffer, in which the two tables of stone were deposited. Besides these, the ark contained the blossoming rod of Aaron, a pot, or golden vase, of manna, and the book of the law, or the precepts that God gave to Moses after the Decalogue. The ark was about four feet long, and two feet three inches wide and high. It was made of acacia wood, a wood which is very hard and durable, and was covered within and without with plates of gold. At the corners were gold rings, through which staves were put for carrying it. The lid of the ark was the mercy-seat. It was all of gold, having an ornamental rim around the edge, and two golden cherubim at the opposite ends, fronting each other. Between the cherubim was a miraculous shining light, known as the shekinah, which betokened the Divine presence; hence God is spoken of as dwelling between the cherubim. The ark was made in Moses' time, to receive the tables of the law. It was preserved through hundreds of

years, and was the most sacred object known to the Israelites. During the march through the wilderness it was borne by priests under a purple canopy. Before it the Jordan was divided, the waters uniting again after the people had passed through. Before it the walls of Jericho fell down. For a time the ark rested at Gilgal; thence it was removed to Shiloh, where it remained three hundred years. It was then captured by the Philistines, was restored, and kept at Kirjath-jearim, whence it was brought by David to Jerusalem. On its way to Jerusalem it was suffered to remain three months in the house of Obed-edom, as we read in the text. David kept the ark in a tent which he had prepared for it in Jerusalem, and when the temple was built by Solomon it was removed thither. What ultimately became of the ark is not certainly known; it probably continued as long as the temple stood,—through hundreds of years. It appears to have been destroyed at the time of the captivity. It was the absence of the ark that made the second temple less glorious than the first, though the second temple became more glorious afterwards by the presence of Christ in it.

We turn to the text. David is removing the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem. Thirty thousand chosen men are appointed for the service. The sacred golden box is brought out of the house of Abinadab, who has been its guardian and keeper till now, and placed in a new cart drawn by oxen. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, act as drivers; Ahio going before. It is a joyous occasion, and all manner of instruments are called into use. With

harps and psalteries, timbrels, cornets, and cymbals, the exultant company make the firmament ring. They come to a certain threshing-floor, when Uzzah puts forth his hand and attempts to steady the ark of God, for the oxen shook it. This was in defiance of a law given to Aaron: "The sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they *shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.*" Uzzah is instantly smitten for his error, and dies. This puts an end to the rejoicing. David is displeased; he dares not proceed, and dismissing the multitude, carries the ark aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, — which is supposed to have been six miles southwest of Jerusalem. Now comes the text: "And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household." When David found that God blessed Obed-edom and all that pertained to him, because of the ark of God; that no harm, but, on the contrary, a blessing came from keeping the ark, — he went and brought it up to the tent which he had made for it in Jerusalem. It would seem that Obed-edom must have been a good man; otherwise he would not have been willing to receive the ark, or have been intrusted with the keeping of it. Nor was the ark taken wholly from Obed-edom and his family; for when it was removed, he and his sons were allowed to accompany it, and were placed in charge of it, with others, as door-keepers of the tabernacle at Jerusalem. Happy the man on whom such favors of Divine Providence fall!

Let religion in the house be our theme. Alas, that

there should be any house from which religion is absent,—in which there is no ark of God, no family altar, no voice of prayer! It would seem, as God looks down on the dwellings of men, that His eye must rest with special satisfaction on those houses where His name is honored and the little circle assemble day by day for prayer. The “Cotter’s Saturday Night” is a picture that we all love to contemplate. We see the reverent company; we note the serious reading of the Word; we hear their artless lays, —

“Then, kneeling down to heaven’s Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays.”

It is a common saying that there is no spot so heavenly, so much like the first paradise, as a Christian home. What is necessary to make ours a Christian home? It is not *wealth*. It does not appear that Obed-edom lived in a grand or costly way. It may have been a very humble dwelling. The name Obed-edom means “tenant of Edom.” He was a Levite, and so could have owned no worldly possessions; and his occupation as porter or door-keeper would imply that he lived in a plain way. Yet his house became the habitation of the most sacred symbol of deity. If wealth made homes happy, alas for the poor! But no home can be so meagre or lowly that it may not be made happy by the presence of this Divine Guest. God is no respecter of persons; and you shall sometimes find His ark abiding where poverty and contentment sit as mutual friends.

To make ours a Christian home it is not necessary

to repair the building and remove the furniture; it is only necessary that our heart be changed. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." It is with the lowly that God loves to dwell: maintain that spirit, and you will have God in your heart and in your home. The text says, "The Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household:" it is not said wherein. Perhaps the ark was a constant reminder, and suppressed angry feelings before they arose, and silenced hasty words before they were spoken, and so made it a home of peace. Or it brought joy by its presence, speaking of honor, responsibility, trust. Or it acted as a charm to ward off disease from the family. God might bless them with health because of their faithful, loving care of His holy ark. Or He might give them prosperity and success in whatever they attempted to do, keeping them from accident, harm, and loss. He might have given them contentment, which is a continual feast. He might have made the children pious and good. There are ways enough. Certain it is that God did bless Obed-edom and "all his household," and we are told further, "all that pertained unto him." Thus children share in a father's recompense. Iniquities are visited to the third and fourth generation, but mercy is shown to thousands that love God and keep His commandments, and thus is suggested the benefit of belonging to a good man's house. We should make our own house such that others may be blessed who live with us. And if we have been brought up in godly families, having had praying fathers and mothers, we have reason

to bless God for the hallowed memories, the good received, and the blessings that have come to us. No one could have lived with Obed-edom who was not benefited by his keeping the ark; and no one can dwell in a Christian home without feeling its sweet influence and reflecting its spirit and life. It is blessed to be connected with those whom God blesses. Not that a father's faith will save his children, but that contact with the good is a good in itself, and the rewards of a good man must be shared by all who are linked with him.

We are to bear in mind that it was the prosperity that keeping the ark brought to Obed-edom that led David to desire the same blessing. "And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness." When our homes are made beautiful by Christian love it will lead others to seek the same possession, that their homes may be made beautiful too.

Now, let us see if we cannot make our homes like Obed-edom's. First, *we must desire to keep the ark.* If you had lived in that street where the ark passed when it was shaken, and judgment fell on the too hasty Uzzah, and a place was sought for the ark, would your door have opened to receive the sacred possession? Might you not have said, "My home is too humble;" or "I am afraid to keep such a sacred treasure;" or "I fear I shall be under too much restraint with the symbol of Deity always in my house." Dear friends,

the ark seeks a resting-place now. God wishes to make your home just like Obed-edom's, but He waits to have you invite Him in. Would that house have been blessed if David had been obliged to force the locks to gain an entrance there? Are you sure that you really want religion, or God's presence, in your house? Is the invitation hearty, "Abide with me"? Perhaps you have said to the Saviour, "Come in!" but it was in too cold a way.

Then, *what are you doing to make His stay pleasant?* You know the excited interest with which you look for a friend's coming. You make ready the guest-chamber, you are provident of the table, you arrange methods for occupying and diverting him. Do you study to please Christ? Is it a royal welcome with which you bid Him enter and reign in your heart? To say "Come in!" without care or preparation, is like dishonoring a friend with inhospitable entertainment. To make your hearts the home of the Saviour, you must remove all that is spiritually offensive to Him. You must brush away the cobwebs of unbelief, you must remove the dust of worldliness, you must sweep out the fragments of idolatry and the shreds of sinful lusts. It is only the pure in heart that shall see God. And when once religion has entered our heart and home, we must try to keep it there. Let kind words be spoken, let love reign there. I cannot think that the house of Obed-edom heard loud talking or angry words. I cannot think the ark rested where a scowl was seen on the face, or scorn or hate was depicted in the eye. A home of sunshine, of gentle ministries and sweet voices, must that home have been.

Nor can a home be what it ought to be *without the family altar*. Prayer is the selvedge of the day, — the self-edge, or woven border; without it things ravel out. God will bless the house where the sweet incense of daily prayer is offered to Him. There is no excuse for the neglect of this duty. Three minutes are sufficient; and if you cannot frame your own prayer, you can repeat the Lord's prayer, or use printed forms. Think of asking a friend to 'stop with you, and then not speaking to him when he comes; keeping him in your house, and not telling him your wants or asking from him in his fulness a favor! It is impossible that a prayerless house should be like Obed-edom's, for the imprecation forbids it: "Pour out Thy fury upon the heathen that know Thee not, and upon the families that call not on Thy name."

Parental government is another important duty. A home is but half a home where there are no children; but children must be governed, to make it a happy home. The "household" of Obed-edom is spoken of; so he had children. The blessing rested on the children. Can you think that they were disobedient or rude? Everything depends on the right training of children. The *Church* and the *State* begin with the *family*. These little homes are the springs in the meadow that the grass hides, or the unnoticed fountains in the mountains whose united currents make the great river. If only our own homes were disturbed by lawlessness, it would not be so bad; but the evil flows out into society to increase confusion and misrule. It is important to educate our children, but it is more important that they be governed. I believe that the

best training of a child is performed before it is two years old. Within that time it will learn who is master. Once conquered, it will stay conquered; but if you submit, it will be difficult getting the authority again into your own hands.

It is delightful to know of new homes created, and of the birth into them of young immortals. The home is the type of Eden. But oh, if we should be unfaithful to our trust; if we should make our home a little pandemonium, and not a little paradise; if we should yield ourselves to fierce passions, and rear children to blight our hearts and curse society, — how sad and terrible it will be! Better not to have lived than to set up homes out of which shall arise children to afflict and dishonor us, and to trouble and harm mankind. The antidote to such a misfortune consists in keeping the ark in our house. Be truly pious, prayerful, watchful, and you may expect that your children will do well. They will be a comfort to you, and a blessing to the world.

And let us *guard against any temporary* efforts or experiences. Obed-edom kept the ark three months; and that is as long as some people keep religion. Nor then did Obed-edom desire to have the ark removed, but followed it with his love and services to Jerusalem. But there are persons who are ready to set the ark out from their dwellings. They tire of keeping it, they cannot endure the services and restraints it enjoins. A fickle and spasmodic piety is a great evil. If the family altar is reared, it is thrown down; the children are instructed, and then neglected; excellent religious counsel is given, and then the life,

which speaks louder than words, contradicts and stultifies all. Alas for the inconsistencies of too many professedly religious parents!

Let us, moreover remember that if we cherish the ark fondly, we shall follow it to the New Jerusalem. Death cannot take from us that which we have kept so long. The transfer to a higher realm will include our own removal. Like Obed-edom, we shall have some service of song or of waiting that shall occupy us in the upper temple. How happy the thought that a Christian home cannot really be broken up! It is only transfer and removal till all be brought where the union is perfect, and partings never come. The venerable father, whom we recall now only in memory, waits the coming of his children to that better home; the gentle mother, whose sweet voice we seem now to hear, tarries in the other apartment till the door be opened and the whole family be gathered into one. Up through Christian homes we find our way to that city and temple where the loved ones who have left us have gone, and where unions are never sundered by the separations of time.

We are told that "on the shores of the Adriatic a beautiful custom prevails among the industrious and simple-hearted people. About the going down of the sun, the wives of the fishermen repair to the sea, and standing upon the wave-washed shore, they sing a melody. After singing the first stanza, they stop and listen, to catch an answering song from their loved ones on the sea. If they hear no melody, they sing another stanza, and then listen again. And thus they continue to send their melodious notes over the waters, until the

answering songs of their husbands fall upon their ears, to assure them of their safe return. Fit symbol of that more blessed relation of the members of scattered households which points to a safe and happy reunion above."

My friends, make your earthly home all that it should be. Let art and taste adorn it, — make it beautiful to the eye; but most of all make it dear to the heart. Let it be the home of prayer, of consistent example, and of holy living. I love to see those illuminated texts and that beautiful prayer, "God bless our home!" but let us not think if we only hang prayer on our walls, that that will suffice. The walls must echo to the voice of prayer; the most beautiful thing in our dwelling must be a holy, loving heart. Dear friends, let us show that religion blesses; let us excite the desire in others to possess what we have found!

GIDEON'S THREE HUNDRED.

GIDEON'S army must be lessened. Who are so fit to be cashiered as the fearful? An ill instrument may shame a good work. God will not glorify Himself by cowards. Christianity requires men. Who can but bless himself to find of two and thirty thousand Israelites two and twenty thousand cowards? Yet all these in Gideon's march made as fair a flourish of courage as the boldest.

JOSEPH HALL.

XXI.

GIDEON'S THREE HUNDRED.

And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men : but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. —
JUDGES vii. 6.

THAT was a singular test for sifting an army. At first there were thirty-two thousand men. The timid were asked to withdraw; that left ten thousand. These were brought to the water to be tried there. They were thirsty and in haste. All but three hundred bowed down and took a full drink, putting their mouths to the water. The remnant brought the water in their hands to their mouths, simply catching it up and hastening on. This was to be the conquering army. The test was an arbitrary one, or it may have served to show positively who possessed the most physical vigor, who could endure fatigue and thirst with most self-control, and who in body and spirit were best prepared for battle. At any rate, they were picked men.

The Book of Judges tells us of the men who judged Israel, and something of the history of those times. It is easy to remember that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and that he was succeeded by Joshua. Moses brought the people to the borders

of Canaan; Joshua led them over the Jordan, and established them in the Promised Land. Then began a series of judges, continuing to the coronation of the first king, Saul. Moses and Joshua were in some sense military leaders; the succeeding judges were civil magistrates. The judges ruled some four hundred years. Gideon was the fifth, and one of the most distinguished; he ruled for forty years, and is one of those who are honorably mentioned in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews.

When the Israelites came into Canaan they found that country in possession of hostile heathen nations. These it was necessary to dispossess. Nor was there ever a permanent peace between Israel and the Canaanites. When the children of Israel sinned, God suffered their enemies to humble and subdue them. We find them now sorely beset by the Midianites; for seven years they have been given into their hand. Whatever the Israelites raised, the Midianites plundered. In such fear were the Israelites that they hid themselves and what little they could save, in the dens and caves of the mountains. We are told that Gideon, at the time he was called to deliver Israel, was threshing wheat by a wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. The story of this call is given in the previous chapter. An angel appeared, and by miraculous signs — by the fire that consumed the offering of flesh and cakes, and by the dew wetting first the fleece, leaving the ground dry, and then wetting the ground, leaving the fleece dry — indicated to Gideon that it was God's will that he should become the leader of Israel, and go out to battle against this foe.

You see, then, Gideon accepting this command, and, as was very natural, rallying all whom he could for the great conflict. The host of the Midianites assemble on "the north side, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley." The Israelites, to the number of thirty-two thousand, gather on the other side, opposite, in the valley. Gideon was perhaps looking with satisfaction on his goodly forces, or possibly trembling that he could not show a larger array, when the voice comes from the Great Commander to cut this number down. So many might lead Israel to vaunt themselves, and say that their own hand had saved them. The sifting begins, and twenty-two thousand timid ones retire from the field. Ten thousand are left, and it is thought these are to have all the labor and the honor of the battle. But a second order is issued: "The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there." We see the test; only three hundred drink from their hand, while all the rest drink from the stream. "And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand." To strengthen the faith of Gideon, the dream is told of the cake of barley bread that tumbled into the host of Midian and smote and overturned a tent,—the signification being that in like manner, by the little band of Israel, would God destroy their foes.

And now the arming of these men is not in the usual way. It is not with sword and spear or sling that they equip for the battle. Three companies are formed, one hundred men in each, and in each man's right hand is placed a trumpet, and in his left a pitcher

having a lamp within. The Midianites and their allies, we are told, "lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, 'as the sand by the sea side for multitude."

Gideon waits till the middle watch of the night, and then in the darkness leads his little band out. His order is, "Do as I do," — "when I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. . . . And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. . . . And all the host ran, and cried, and fled; . . . and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host."

Many thoughts arise in connection with this history. We have here *lessons of faith*. Gideon, as I have said, is enrolled among men eminent in this particular. It must have required on his part much confidence in God to cut down the army to the merest handful, instead of increasing it. An immense array appears against Gideon, and instead of rallying all the able-bodied men of the twelve tribes of Israel, he is told to dismiss the army that he has as too many; and when twenty-two thousand have gone back to their homes, he is still told that the remaining ten thousand are far too many. Not even one thousand are necessary; three hundred are enough. What but faith could have led Gideon to believe these statements, or to dare to go out with such a handful against

such a foe? Then, further, the handful were not to put on the ordinary weapons of offence or defence. They had neither shield nor sword. Pitchers and lamps! What weapons with which to assault the host of Midian! It would seem that Gideon's faith must have faltered when he came to weapons, if not before. But he had God's promise, and he acted in perfect accord with what he was told. It was a novel kind of warfare, but if God said it, it was enough. Gideon might have said, "Pitchers and lamps! Of what possible use are they, and how can three hundred men accomplish anything against a foe so strong?" But he raised no question. So we, in our contests, movements, and marches, are not to question, but simply to trust and obey.

It appears further that *God is not limited in His methods*. How strange the test by which the three hundred valiant ones were discovered, and how singular the equipment and style of assault of the little army! Man never would have originated such a test, or laid out such a plan of battle. The whole was of God, who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working."

We see also that *God can save by few*. He can make five chase a hundred, and a hundred put ten thousand to flight. In Gideon's little army is an illustration that God and one are a majority. The world may combine against us, but if God is on our side, we are mightier than it. We are quite disposed to count forces, to look at numbers, to be influenced by that which may be touched and seen. But if God is with and for us, we need not fear;

serried ranks or combined elements of woe are powerless against him whom God defends.

We learn, moreover, that *numbers are not always an indication of strength*. Gideon's army was stronger with three hundred than with thirty thousand. We can sometimes strengthen by reducing. The saying is quoted, "God is always on the side of the heaviest battalions." There is some truth in this; and yet the battalion on whose side God is, is always heavy. Physical strength and numbers are not in themselves enough. And even in a natural way a few may be better than many. There are weak elements in substances and among men that it is better to part with than to keep. The clarifying process leaves a purer residuum. Every cowardly and faint-hearted soldier impairs the strength of an army. So in the Church, you may have bulk without strength. It were better to admit into membership five persons soundly converted, than fifty not at all or but half converted. The "mixed multitude" were a hindrance to Israel, and the dead professors in a Church are its curse and bane. Care should be exercised in admitting members. A person truly converted, if not brought into the Church will not be lost; while an unconverted person admitted to the Church will weaken its force, and be less likely himself to become converted. Every Church needs weeding, and that Church is best off that needs it least. It were well to treat the Lord's army as Gideon treated his; and if thirty thousand become three hundred, there will still be a gain. It is true this is a kind of arithmetic that hardly suits the pride of man. There is a charm in numbers.

David was tempted to number Israel; and it is a temptation that still assails cities, churches, and men. It is amusing to see how different communities are constantly taking the census, and vying with one another in the count of men. Take in the suburbs, plough in more acres, annex cities on opposite banks, even make mistakes in counting, only be sure that your city is ahead! It is not to be denied that there are some symptoms of this sort in churches. Let us remember Gideon's three hundred, and reason that it is not altogether impossible to advance by reduction; that there is such a thing as lessening, which is not weakening, to make strong.

Yet again, there is brought to view in this narrative *the union of Divine and human agency*. The large army must be cut down, lest it be said, "Mine own hand hath saved me." And yet there must be an army, and methods and agencies that are human. The best men are chosen; a singular but effective method of warfare is adopted; a time is fixed; orders are given; and an assault is made. It was God who arranged the details and made the whole project successful. He appointed the test of lapping the water; He ordered the reduction of the army; He undoubtedly suggested the night assault and the singular use of trumpets, lamps, and pitchers. He also caused the attack to result, as Gideon expected, in the destruction of the Midianites and the deliverance of Israel. Thus it was human means and Divine strength uniting. There is something grand in the war-cry with which they entered into the battle, — "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!" That was the startling

shout that fell on the ears of the Midianites as in the darkness of the night they heard the crashing of pitchers and saw the flashing of lights. It was not the voice of one man, but all, as they blew their trumpets, sounded this cry. That must be the Church's cry and ours in all the conflicts of this world. It is not the sword of man, nor the sword of the Lord alone, but of both combined. We must march on the redoubts of Satan saying, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon;" we must attack vice and error, evil habits and practices, and hoary superstitions, crying, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon;" we must go forth with our missionary operations, and assault the walls of ancient heathendom and the temples of idol gods, saying, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." The Church fails when it depends on its own arm to bring the nations to Christ. Nor in humbler attempts to save those around us can we do anything, only as we keep in mind the correlated necessary union of the human and the Divine. A sword in our hand, without God's aid, is powerless; a broken pitcher, with His blessing, will do great service.

We see, again, *it is easy for God to destroy His enemies*; it is only necessary to let them destroy themselves. The three hundred used no swords; they simply made a panic, and the affrighted enemy, mistaking one another, destroyed their own men. It was a terrible slaughter, and the results were all brought about by simply inflicting upon the Midianites a false alarm. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth," and all that may be necessary to bring them into destruction may be to turn their conscience

on itself, or to let them hear some false alarm. The forces of evil are so powerful, and the Church is so weak, that it seems to some too much to expect that that prayer will ever be answered, "Thy kingdom come." We are a feeble folk, and all our weapons seem to have no adequate relation to the strength to be overcome. But our enemies themselves shall yet help us; and implements that resist us shall be used on the foe. We are only responsible for the use of means; the results that shall grow out of these are with God. Nothing is too hard for God, and Satan's empire may collapse before prayer and a handful of missionaries as readily as the countless host of Midian before Gideon's three hundred. Canaan was promised to Israel no more certainly than all the earth is promised to our Christ. It is only a question of time; and if the sifting has not yet come, or the lamps and pitchers are not yet ready, the future is bringing on the day when every foe will be vanquished, and Christ's kingdom established in all the earth. We may take that scene in the valley of Moreh as typical of what is yet to be. The gospel trumpet is now sounding; ministers are the earthen vessels through which the light of truth is flashing, error is growing weaker from self-inflicted wounds, and the reign of peace and rest is drawing near.

The *practical question* with us now is, *Where do we stand in this conflict of forces*, — with the Midianites, or with Gideon? And if with Gideon, — with his great army, or his little band? The rejected ones are the men who love ease and are faint-hearted. Are we such? The three hundred are the earnest, resolute,

valiant ones. Are we such? If there were a sifting in the Church now, where should we be found, — with the chosen few, or the rejected many? We read of another three hundred who defended the pass of Thermopylæ. They left their dead bodies in the defile, and their courage and patriotism have gone into history, adding the highest lustre to the Lacedæmonian name. Are we such soldiers for Christ? Is there anything in our piety, principles, or valor that might lead our conquering Prince to gather us around Him as His “picked men”? It is well if we belong at all to the army of the Lord; but it is better to be of that little band on whom He bestows His most important trusts, and on whom He relies for His most effective battling. On the few His eye rests with tenderest interest; on the few He hangs the issues of His cause; on the few He puts the highest badge of honor. To be of this few, self must be subordinated, ease must be put aside, and fatigue, conflict, and danger cheerfully borne. Do we not want some share in the grand victories which our Christ is to achieve? Can we be content with seeing others marching to the contest, and we rejected, or lurking in the rear? Can we be soldiers and do no fighting? Is it enough to appear once a week on dress parade? Let us be of the three hundred whose devotion is extraordinary and whose deeds are great, rather than of the thirty thousand whose lives are valueless, who simply count, — swelling the bulk, but weakening the power of the Church. You are deceived if you think there is no fighting to be done, and that the Midianites are not near. In many ways the enemies of religion are now attacking the faith of

believers and are seeking to cripple the power of the Church. I have no fears for the result, but I believe that we are living in very critical times. Scepticism is rampant, worldliness prevails, some friends who stood high have fallen off, and we know not what we may witness next. It seems as if the Lord were leading His people down to the brook, and testing their devotion, earnestness, and zeal. Many get down upon their knees and drink; but few lap and run. Let us be in haste, hardy, full of courage, mightily in earnest, eager for the fight. Jesus leads us; let us be valiant. The strife may last long; but ultimately our Prince will conquer, and we shall share in the honors of His reign.

LIFE'S CHANGES.

FATHER, I know that all my life
Is portioned out for me,
And the changes that are sure to come
I do not fear to see ;
But I ask Thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee.

There are briers besetting every path
That call for patient care ;
There is a cross in every lot,
And an earnest need for prayer :
But a lowly heart that leans on Thee
Is happy anywhere.

MISS A. L. WARING.

XXII.

LIFE'S CHANGES.

These are the journeys of the children of Israel. — NUMBERS
xxxiii. 1.

THERE are special moving times in city and country. Life itself is full of change. But few remain long in one place. As we observe the moving loads of household goods, a voice seems to say to us, "These are the journeys of the children of Israel."

In the chapter from which the text is taken, if we leave out the places, the verses follow one another thus: "And they departed;" "And they removed;" "And they departed;" "And they removed;" "And they departed;" "And they removed;" "And they removed;" "And they removed;" "And they took their journey;" "And they departed;" "And they removed," — and so on and on through the forty years of their sojourn in the wilderness. It appears that they made forty-two journeys in that time, which makes an average of less than a year to a place. With a map we could find these places, trace the route which God's people took, and see how round-about it was. They had only about two hundred miles to go, and yet it took them forty years, and

all the removals and changes of forty years, to get to the Land of Promise! In this, as in other particulars, they were a type of the human family. Like them, we are the subject of removal and change; our life history is a succession of marches.

As we look at this catalogue of places we see that some of them were places rendered specially memorable. Rameses was the Israelites' Egyptian home, — land of their birth, yet land of bondage. Marah was the bitter well whose waters were sweetened in a miraculous manner. Elim is spoken of as a place of special refreshment. "There were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters." Soon we find them in the wilderness of Sin: here they hunger, and the quails are sent; manna also begins to fall. At Rephidim they thirst again, and God gives them water out of the rock. Here, too, was the famous battle with the Amalekites when Moses prayed, his hands being stayed up by Aaron and Hur while Joshua fought. At Sinai the law was given on tables of stone amid mighty signs and wonders. Here also the people fell into idolatry, worshipping the golden calf and suffering for their sin. Kibroth-hattaavah was the encampment where the people complained that they were tired of manna, and quails were sent in such abundance as to bring a deadly plague; so they named the place "Graves of lust."

We cannot follow the Israelites from place to place, or mention the particulars of their history. It was one protracted scene of change and removal, of blessing and judgment, of hostility and strife, of danger

and deliverance. Much the same is it with us in our march through this world. We start out with very vague notions, and we find our way very different from what we anticipated. We call the fancies of childhood and youth dreams, for they are seldom, if ever, realized. And as we get on in life we look back and say, "That was my Red Sea; that was my bitter well; those were my Elim fountains and palm-tree shadows. There I fought with the Amalekites; there I set up my golden idols; there I complained of the manna and was punished."

Occasionally we meet with persons, advanced in life, who have never occupied any other than their present home. But even in that case, others have gone out from that home, and many changes have come. Commonly, Egypt and Canaan lie widely apart, with a winding-way between. We congratulate a young couple starting out in life, and we try to forget the possibilities of a changing future; but as their life-history unfolds, we see that time and chance happen to them as to others. Little ones come to them, but again and again in their weary march they stop to dig a grave. Anxieties furrow the brow, burdens bend the form, and, finally, the home with its occupants is gone. The birds do not commonly rear their broods in the same nest, but every spring season witnesses the building of new homes. We are glad when the birds come back to us; we welcome their songs, and we notice that the great business of their lives seems to be the rearing of a young brood. They make their work lighter by song, and the joy of their work shows itself in their melodies. The nest-building goes on, and soon little

eggs are there. We wait a while, and new lives are there; we wait longer, and the nest is deserted, the young birds have flown. Is it not somewhat thus with the homes represented here? Is it not fragments of households that appear in every congregation? Recall some of those scenes of childhood. Happy are you if changes have not been many with you! Some of you are well on in the march, and the childhood home seems distant. You were born, perhaps, in the country, and as your thoughts go back you recall the farm-dwelling, the towering trees, the running brook, "the old oaken bucket that hung in the well," the rustic school-house and the boys and girls, — loved companions of those early days. Or you lived in the city, and the scenes of the city come back to you; you see the streets as they were, the buildings, people, and customs of those times; and the change is no less great. If some of us should attempt to write out our life-history, what a sweep it would take! "I was born in such a place; there I passed my school-days; there I began my married life; in that house our child was born; in that house death brought its first sorrows; in that house loss and bankruptcy overtook us; from that home father and mother left us." And so, as we look back and pass on in the survey, places and scenes come up to us thick as monuments in a cemetery inscribed "Sacred to the memory."

It is not that I wish to make you sad that I revive these memories. I simply repeat a fact, that by a timely reference to it we may be profitably impressed.

What shall we say, then, of these "journeys of the children of Israel"?

1. Evidently, *God's way is the right way*. The Psalmist sings, "He led them forth by the *right way*, that they might go to a city of habitation." It was the right way, and yet so crooked, toilsome, and dangerous! It seemed the wrong way, for it led into the sea and through hostile tribes, and was a way of want and weariness; it led through the wilderness, and was a way in which hunger and thirst were experienced, demanding the interposition of miracles; it was a way over which the people walked, finding fault and complaining at every step, — and yet it was the *right way*. No guide ever took the tourist over a better or surer path. The pillar of cloud and of fire betokened that Omniscience was guiding, and that the way was right; if difficult and strange, it was still the safest and best to follow. So we may be sure that whatever changes come to us, God's way is best. "Our times are in His hand," and it is a matter of rejoicing that it is so. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." If God left us to ourselves, we should soon stray and fall into trouble. What we have to do, then, is to follow where God leads, stop our complaints and murmuring, and halt or march as the pillar in the advance settles or lifts itself forward. Your way has been a changing and roundabout one, but it is thus God is bringing you home. Severe trials have come to you, great dangers have threatened you, your courage has often failed, and bitter tears have fallen; yet God knew where He was leading you just as truly as when He brought His people into the land of the Amorites, or suffered them to turn back with terror before the

Anakim. Undoubtedly we are free, yet somehow there is a Hand leading us; and what is specially gratifying is that the Hand is a wise and good one.

“He leadeth me! Oh, blessed thought!
Oh, words with heavenly comfort fraught! —
What e’er I do, where’er I be,
Still ’tis God’s hand that leadeth me.”

The knowledge that it is God’s hand that “leadeth” us will tend to smooth the roughness of the way, dispelling fear, inspiring courage, producing peace. The path of duty is ever the path of true happiness; so that it is enough to know that this is what the Master appoints. It is hard to make changes, to break away from tender associations, to leave work or friends or places that are dear; and yet it is a great relief to feel that God goes with us and that it is all right. It would be a pain to stay when God and duty call us hence. Thus if our way be intricate and difficult, it may still be joyous by the consciousness that God is with us in it all.

2. Again, changes impress us with the *fleeting character of earthly things*. What stands? Human monuments crumble, and on everything sublunary is written, “Passing away!” “Here we have no continuing city!” We come back to the place where we once lived, we seek the house where friends used to greet us, and we are told the family has moved away; we call at the old familiar store, and it is a new sign and unknown names that meet the eye; we go upon the street, and we never saw those faces before. The business circles, the passing multitudes, the Sabbath

congregations, are constantly changing. And so there is kept before the eye this truth, that we are strangers and pilgrims on earth. The children of Israel could not stop to build cities, or, if they did, they had soon to abandon them, for they were on a march. We are not to settle down here, build habitations, and feel that this is our home; but go, as if light-armed, pitch our tent, then strike it, and march along. Do you not see, in that you cannot remain in one state or place long, that you must expect change? And will you not accept the fact, and adapt yourself to the conditions of this changing world? Will you grieve because changes come? Will you not rather be thankful that they are not more frequent? And will you not sit loosely to things in which you cannot trust, and anchor your hopes in a world where changes do not come? It is one of the good things of change that it awakens jealousy and distrust of earth. Seeing our "fondest hopes decay," the tree or flower fading, the petted creature dying, we look for a place where blight does not come, or death chill the heart and close the eye. There is no doubt that changes are an antidote to worldliness. If we could stay and keep and change not, then we might be satisfied with earth, and desire no better home. Israel journeyed in pursuit of the promised rest, and these changes remind us that we are doing the same; and as God stirred up the nest of Israel, so He aims to allure us forth into our native skies. The piercing of the thorns must make us long the more to fly.

Changes also make heaven more attractive. If we could keep our friends on this side of the river, we

might not care for a better home; if we had no sorrows, we might think less of that world where tears do not fall. The very contrast of change, weariness, and death lifts into attractive grandeur the city within whose walls the light of God is shining, where tears are wiped away, and to whose ransomed inhabitants immortal life is given. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." And so we sing: —

"Beyond the smiling and the weeping
I shall be soon;
Beyond the waking and the sleeping,
Beyond the sowing and the reaping,
I shall be soon."

3. Another suggestion that comes to us from these changing scenes is, "*What thou doest, do quickly.*" Time flies; opportunities are soon gone. In the field of home, parent, do your best. Your children are not to be with you always. You may not note the change, and this may make you less diligent; but the little ones will soon be out of your arms and out of your home. You must impress them now; you must set the seal while the wax is hot. Every day brings changes and lessens your time. Family government is best secured in the first years of childhood; it becomes more difficult as the child grows. And this is something which parents themselves should bear in mind. Too many forget that precept, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Parents may flatter themselves that somehow a neglected child will turn out well; but there is little to encourage such a hope. It is the child that is to be trained; and when the training is neglected, remedial efforts are employed too late. The time in which to save men is to save them when they are boys. Not only parents, but teachers in the day-schools and the Sabbath-schools should be impressed with their responsibility. It is the plastic clay that is committed to their hands, and they should mould it now into something useful and good. So of ministers of the gospel; they have no time to lose. The charge to them is suitable, "What thou doest, do quickly." Ministers ought to preach like dying men to dying men. There is no time to discuss side questions, or to entertain with philosophies and fine sentiments. What would you think of trying to divert a sick man with a chapter from Dickens or a passage from Shakspeare, instead of hastening for the doctor? Nor would you, if the sick man did not know of his danger, on that account slacken your speed. So of all opportunities of usefulness,—opportunities to speak and do; to encourage, relieve, and bless; to minister to the body or to bring a soul to Christ,—you must speak and do now. So of hearing the gospel. None knows when he will appear in the house of God for the last time.

4. In our march through the wilderness, whatever our changes, *we must not leave our religion behind us*. Every house should have its family altar, and if we move, it should go with us. You may not distinguish it among the material articles or household goods that are piled upon the dray, but it should be somewhere

among those affections and objects that constitute your home. Not that a mere form is of value. If there is a prayer in the morning, and there are cross words through the day, it is hardly a happy home. But prayer to begin and end the day with is a good selvedge, and a good preventive against anger and bitterness. Let those who are arranging or re-furnishing their houses, or beginning their married life, not think their homes complete if they have not an altar of prayer in them. And as we pass from dwelling to dwelling, or place to place, let us ever crave that God's presence may go with us. We read of the patriarchs as they journeyed from place to place, — of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and others, — “There he built an altar, and called on the name of the Lord.” We know how much the Israelites thought of the ark which they carried with them through all their journeying to the Promised Land. The ark symbolized God's presence with them; above it were the cherubim, the mercy-seat, and the ever-shining Shekinah. Moses prayed, “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” We may have no visible ark, but we may have just as truly God for our companion, protector, and guide. Oh, happy home where the Divine presence is recognized; where Jesus, the Elder Brother, is counted in!

We live in a changing world; but we must not lose sight of the fact that we are on our journey home. Every march in the wilderness brought the Israelites nearer to the Promised Land. If the distance sometimes widened, it was the way marked out in the plan of God. So —

“Nightly we pitch our moving tent
A day’s march nearer home.”

Soon the departures and the removals will cease, and we, if we overcome, shall reach that temple and city from which we shall go no more out forever. As nature has its changes, and no winter was ever so drear that spring did not return; as after the frosts and the death-silence the buds swell and open, and the birds come back to cheer us with their songs, — so we, after our bitterest griefs and most stunning losses, must rise to a life of gladness, and shed on hearts around us a radiance of joy. My friends, do not be made sad by life’s changes; gird yourselves, rather, for new exertions, and take heart for the remainder of the way. Do not wear a sorrowful countenance, and chill others with your grief. Look sunny; speak cheerily; let love beam in your eye. Hail the day when, the changes ended, the pilgrimage completed, the river crossed, we shall come to the Father’s house and the eternal home!

ALL THINGS FOR GOOD.

It is with wealth as with a water reservoir: when the drought has dried it up, you find in the deserted bed things that were lost years ago, and curious, interesting things which, but for this circumstance, would never have been known. So, where it is a believing, contented mind, it will discover in the deserted channel, when the flood of fortune has drained away, unsuspected sources of enjoyment and lost things, feelings which long since vanished, simple pleasures and primitive emotions which abundance had overflowed.

JAMES HAMILTON.

XXIII.

ALL THINGS FOR GOOD.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. — ROM. viii. 28.

THIS text is like a bench in a park,—it is meant for the weary. All God's promises furnish support. Blessed promises, how they comfort and refresh us on our pilgrim way! The Bible is more a book of promises than of precepts. Think of a house where commands should outnumber gentle words! The precepts are few; the promises are many. Those little books that alternate a precept and a promise hardly furnish a fair proportion. For one command they should give a score of promises. God is a "faithful promiser;" and it is promise, promise, promise, all the way along. The earthly Canaan was the *land of promise*, and heaven is to us our "promised land." It is the promises of a faithful God on which we rely, and these cheer us as we pass along. The Bible is not a law-book, but a cheque-book, with God's name signed to the blanks. It is not a mere code of "Do this and this," or "Do that and that," but a store-house of gracious "I wills." It is for us to complete the writing, and get what we will.

So, then, in our life-march we come to-day to this blessed text; we rest down on it: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." "*We know.*" Paul was sure of it; he was inspired, and he had experience. And observe, it is in the present tense; it is not a note of hand drawn for ninety days, good when the time is up, but it is on demand, good now. "*All things work together,*" — work now, do work, — not "shall work." This text is often misquoted thus: "All things *shall* work." But this is not correct. The comfort is not postponed; it is not an assurance that somehow things will come out right by and by, but a declaration that God is ordering the present for our good. We are told that "A young candidate for licensure once delivered his trial-piece before a body of ministers. He seemed to make a good impression, and he thought he had done well. At the close, an opportunity was given for criticism. A veteran pioneer arose and expressed his approbation of the doctrine and style of the discourse. 'But,' said he, 'I have a serious objection to make to the use of one scripture. Did the young brother say, "All things *shall* work together for good to them that love God"?' 'Yes, sir.' 'That is wrong, though a very common mistake. You will find the passage reads, "All things *work* together for good." *Shall* is not there.' The young man endeavored to explain that it was a mere verbal slip, a redundancy that did not affect the meaning; but the father in the ministry insisted, as then seemed too pertinaciously, that the 'shall' should not be there. 'But,' writes the young man, 'every year since shows me more

and more clearly the force of that seemingly trivial criticism.' ”

It requires faith to believe God's promises. A promise seems to imply a lack of faith; hence the reason for giving promises and repeating them so often. We are like children in the dark, and we must hear the father's or mother's voice every now and then. But some things seem so impossible that it staggers us to believe what God says. God gave a promise to Abraham, and then told him to slay his son. Abraham might have hesitated, saying, “Then where shall the seed arise that is to be numerous as the stars?” Moses was bidden to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, but was brought where walls of rock shut him in, with the enemy behind and the sea before. It seems strange that a difficult, round-about way should be the right way; yet it was so in the case of Israel. The Psalmist writes: “He led them forth by the right way.” We have God's word that He will bring us home; and *He will*. We have only to obey and trust, — follow the precepts, and believe the promises.

And can anything be more comforting and supporting than these words, “All things work together for good to them that love God”?

I. “*All things work.*” God's workshop has an endless variety of tools. Sky and water, wind and fire, become His servitors. Not only things, matter, but events, history, philosophy, — all the powers of the world, even afflictions and the spirits of darkness, — are so used by Him as to work His people's good. He is like a man with a turning-lathe, having in his shop all sorts of instruments; there are chisels, — angular,

square, and scalloped; some large, and some small; some for special, and some for common purposes,— and with these, variously used, he brings the wood, ivory, or iron into a beautiful, symmetrical shape. Now he takes up one instrument, and now another: all are needed, all have their use. It is not till we have been completely turned and moulded, and everything has been used on us, that we are fitted for a better sphere. So we expect an alternation of treatment; the “all things” must be used and gone through with, and then we shall come out a perfected form. At one time we need a larger cutting, and then that which gives polish and smoothness; now the great chisel that cuts and gouges, and now the delicate graver that smooths and pares. And thus our life-history is wrought out, and character and principle are formed.

What a joy to think that these implements are in the hands of One who has a plan, and is infinitely good and wise in working! Now it seems as if the sharp instrument were going through the revolving shaft, but it stops in time; there the form bulges, and there it is small; but it is strength and beauty that are secured by all. The great Workman has an ideal design, and the Hand is unfolding what is seen by the inner Eye. The wrong tool, an incorrect judgment, a defective hand, would spoil all. But the Being who made the “all things” knows how to use them, and will use them for our good. We may not read the design or enjoy the shaping, but it is all right.

It is an honor to be one to whom such skill and force are given, the soul to whose forming all things

are subordinated, and that can feel that as a creature it is loved and placed above all. We sometimes take pride in saying, "This was wrought in such a loom, or is the product of such a factory;" but the soul that is introduced into heaven all perfect and glorious will call forth the admiration of angels and be the joy of Him by whose Divine power and fitting, in this laboratory of human history, it was prepared for that holy state.

2. Notice, next, that a beautiful harmony pervades all God's works. "All things *work together*," — thus teaching man a lesson of sympathy, co-operation, unity. How marvellous that things so unlike, distant, and diverse should come together, and, like the members of a choir or the performers in an orchestra, unite in producing a perfect harmony! "All things *work together*." Divine providence is not an uncertain, irregular, disjointed thing; the universe is not like a heap of broken bolts, scraps, and bars that are thrown together in a workshop; on the contrary, there is fitness, method, plan, coalescing, uniting, pervading all. God could put a number upon each article, indicating its place in the infinite purpose, just as stones are sometimes numbered and brought together in the construction of a great building. This unity of labor has its illustrations in the works of men. You are shown into a woollen-mill, where beautiful shawls are fabricated. The different steps are indicated, from the dyeing of the wool up through the adjustment and variations of machinery, the mingling of colors and weaving of threads, the clatter and play of looms, the assorting and trimming and folding, till the article,

finished and beautiful, lies ready to be sent forth for the purchaser to wear. It is a noisy, confused, unintelligible work and process; but there is order, unity, purpose, running through all. Again, you enter a watch-factory. Here the lower floor is given to making the tools with which to work; thus starting at the beginning. Here, too, is the engine that drives all the works; and then, as you ascend, you pass from grosser to lighter works,—the cutting of plates to the threading of tiny screws, the nice adjustment of part to part, the careful painting of the dial, the putting in the case, the final application of the key, and the running of the finished watch. How delightful to think that in this way all God's creation, all its parts, are working together for our good! We can hardly credit it; but He says it, and we must believe what He says. Man is the highest object of His love; even the angels are not so dear to Him as man: the angels are our servitors, and come among the "all things." It is for man that the great workshop of the universe was built; man is the last and most important object in the work of creation; it is for man that the system of redemption has been devised; and it is in connection with man that God, through His mighty gospel, has caused His wisdom, power, and love, in their most stupendous forms, to be seen.

3. In the accomplishment of His purposes God's ways are sometimes very dark; and yet here is the assurance that "all things work together *for good* to them that love God." We do not know how it is, but it is so. We are poor judges; God's ways are best; and often our sorest trials bring us the greatest joy.

Trials strengthen faith, refine the spirit, wean from earth, increase usefulness, fit for heaven. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life." "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." It sometimes requires very hard methods and very severe strokes to bring a man into the right attitude and frame. I recall a visit to a large scythe-factory. There were the iron furnaces, the ponderous trip-hammers, the tempering-room, and the emery-wheels. I saw the whole process of making scythes. There stood the black, unsightly bar of steel: now it was put into the furnace till it glowed with heat; then it passed under the huge hammer, crushing and flattening it along its entire length, and forming it into the appearance of a blade; then it was taken to the tempering-room and put into a furnace hotter than before. The tempering-room was entirely dark; every ray of light was excluded. Window, crack, or crevice there was none; the only thing visible was the glowing furnace. In this the blade was held till it reached a clear white heat, which could be determined only by the darkness around; it was then plunged into water and suddenly cooled, and thus tempered and hardened for its subsequent use. From the tempering-room it was taken to another room, where strong men sat above revolving wheels. The now hardened blade was held upon the flying stone: the

noise was harsh, and the sparks flew; but a polished face and a keen edge were given to that which had been black and dull before. And so at last the blade took form and lustre, and was fitted for its grander use. Thus the scythe was made; and then on a June morning you might have gone where the tall grass was waving, and seen the glittering blade sweeping along its course, keeping time to the husbandman's song, and doing its part earnestly towards the ultimate ingathering. It was better to be the useful scythe than the steel bar. As I stood in that tempering-room the thought came to me,—It is thus that God deals with men. Dark room and white heat are necessary in life's discipline. Hammer and fire are not pleasant processes; but it is thus that we are brought to our highest state. God says it, and it must be true: "All things work together for *good* to them that love God." The poor steel cries "No!" when hammer falls and fire glows; but the keen, rejoicing, useful blade says, "The way of suffering is the way of joy."

"Ah! if we knew it all, we should surely understand
That the balance of sorrow and joy is held with an even Hand;
That the scale of success or loss shall never overflow,
And that compensation is twined with the lot of high and low.

"The easy path in the lowland hath little of grand or new;
But a toilsome ascent leads on to a wide and glorious view.
Peopled and warm is the valley, lonely and chill the height;
But the peak that is nearer the storm-cloud is nearer the stars
of light."

4. Finally, we must bear in mind to whom this promise is addressed, — "*to them that love God.*"

There is no promise of good to others. You must love God, you must be His child, you must seek to please Him, if you expect that He will direct and control all the forces of His creation and all the operations of His providence for your good. The phrase, "to love God," is comprehensive. It suggests the obligations and relations of the creature to the Creator. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." You best describe the believer, disciple, and friend of God by saying that he loves God. Love is generic; love implies and includes right feelings and an outwardly correct life. Jesus said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words." Love is stronger than friendship; love implies intimacy, sympathy, oneness. The largeness of this promise, then, depends on the relation in which you stand to God. It is no promise, it is a denial, if you do not love God. The forces of nature are not working for you, if you are not working for God. Either God is for you, and all things are yours, or God is against you, and nothing is yours. Let me read again: "All things work together for good to them that love God." God knows whether you love Him, and you ought to know whether you love Him. If you love Him, you try to please Him; you think of Him, live for Him, pray to Him. You are not ashamed of Him, you come into His family, you call yourself His child, you love His Church, His Bible, His ordinances. Think of a boy loving his father, and yet treating indifferently the letter that that father writes, and not doing what he wishes or enjoins! You love the service of God, and you do all that you have talent and opportunity to do. More, you take sweetly and

pleasantly all that your Father sends; you do not look severe and rebel when He afflicts. When He says, "for good," He means real good, not seeming good. Oftentimes we pray, and it is better that God should deny our prayers; or we count something good, and He takes it away. When we cannot see the meaning, we must have faith to believe that it is all right and well; and if you love God, you will not question His wisdom or love. You will drink the bitter cup; you will submit to the hard fare, saying, "My Father appoints it, and it is well."

Now, my friend, How is it with you? Are you one who can appropriate to himself this gracious promise? Do you love God; and is God in all things seeking your good? Happy are you if you can answer, "Yes." But if you answer, "No," let me urge you to put aside your indifference or wicked hostility and to come into friendly relations with God now. Take this promise; make it yours; fill out the blank by inserting your own name. You ought to love God, and you need Him for a friend. Love Him, and He will centre on you the fulness of His grace; He will make all things work together for your good. Do not turn away from Him, then; do not choose the world as your portion; do not rest your love and confidence and hope here. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." You are for God or against Him; you cannot occupy neutral ground. Come, then, take your stand with the friends of God; come where His love shall shine upon you; come where the blessed-

ness of that glorious text shall take possession of your heart and be yours to appropriate: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

"Sometime, when all life's lessons have been learned,
And sun and stars forevermore have set,
The things which our weak judgments here have spurned,
The things o'er which we grieved with lashes wet,
Will flash before us, out of life's dark night,
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue,
And we shall see how all God's plans are right,
And how what seemed reproof was love most true.

"And we shall see how, while we frown and sigh,
God's plans go on as best for you and me ;
How, when we called, He heeded not our cry
Because His wisdom to the end could see.
And even as wise parents disallow
Too much of sweet to craving babyhood,
So God, perhaps, is keeping from us now
Life's sweetest things, because it seemeth good."

RUTH'S CHOICE.

THE Book of Ruth does not preach by means of mighty deeds of war inspired by faith, but by acts of love which demand no less strength of soul. God can be praised not only with timbrels and trumpets, but also in quietness and silence. It is often easier to die for the faith than in the midst of men to live for it.

PAULUS CASSEL.

XXIV.

RUTH'S CHOICE.

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God : where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. — RUTH i. 16, 17.

THE Book of Ruth follows that of Judges because the scenes described here occurred during the reign of the judges. The opening sentence is, "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land." We have here a beautiful eclogue, or pastoral poem, superior to any that Virgil or Theocritus ever wrote, going back and telling us what happened during the reign of one of the judges. A family of Bethlehem, driven by famine, went to the East and settled in the country of Moab, on the east side of the Dead Sea. So families nowadays sometimes leave one locality for another, to better their fortunes. Moab lay in the way to Canaan, and the Israelites had to fight their way through that country when they went up from Egypt. The Moabites and the Ammonites were descended from Lot; they were idolaters, and, like the surrounding nations, hostile to the children of Israel. At this time, however,

the Moabites and the Israelites seem to have been at peace. The Book of Judges is a book of wars; the Book of Ruth is a book of peace. One is like the blasts of winter; the other is like the breath of spring. The family that left their home to dwell among the Moabites consisted of a father, mother, and two sons. They thought to better their estate, but fresh sorrows came. The father died, leaving his wife and sons alone. The sons, growing up, married daughters of the Moabites, who, as I said, were a foreign, hostile, and idolatrous people. Soon the sons die, and the family, now without husband or son, is composed of three widows, — the mother and her two daughters-in-law. We are ready to weep for Naomi when we think of her lonely condition, her husband and sons laid away in the grave, and she far from her early home and friends, among a strange people. At length she determines to return to the land of Israel, for she has heard that the Lord has visited His people in giving them bread. The two daughters-in-law accompany her as she starts on the journey. She urges them to turn back to the homes of their childhood and to remain among their own people. Orpah is persuaded, but Ruth remains firm. It is a tender, tearful scene. They kissed, and lifted up their voice and wept, for they were never to meet again. After Orpah had turned away, Naomi said to Ruth, "Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law." The earnest, decided reply of Ruth is given in the text, "In-treat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee," etc.

Having accompanied her mother-in-law into Judæa, Ruth becomes her solace and support, and at length marries Boaz, a rich kinsman of Naomi, and in this way, though of gentile and heathen stock, is brought into eminent connection with the people of God. From this marriage David descended, and through him our Saviour Jesus Christ. Both David and Jesus were born in the same Bethlehem from which Naomi and her husband, in the days of the judges, departed on account of the famine. The "House of Bread" had no bread then; and that was the first link in a chain of providences that brought Ruth into the sacred chronology, and led on to make this the birthplace of her distinguished descendant David, and of Him whom David called Lord, though He was yet his Son, and Who declared Himself to be the Bread of God Which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.

The story of Ruth is one of abiding interest. Says a recent commentator, "The little book of Ruth consists of only eighty-five verses; but these enclose a garden of roses as fragrant and full of mystic calyxes as those which the modern traveller still finds blooming and twining about the solitary ruins of Israel and Moab, this side the Jordan and beyond. The significance and beauty of the brief narrative cannot be highly enough estimated, whether regard be had to the thought which fills it, the historical value which marks it, or the pure and charming form in which it is set forth. With good reason the book is not called 'Naomi,' or 'Boaz,' or 'The Descent of David,' but 'Ruth.' For she is the central point of the whole

narrative. Her love is the groundwork of the history it relates. That she became the ancestress of David was only the reward of her virtue. The idea to be set forth, and which gives such great significance to the little book, is the power of love as conquering all national contrarieties, hostilities, and prejudices. It is not a story of romantic love between man and woman, but of the reverential love of a widow for the mother of her deceased husband. The love portrayed in the character of Ruth is of the purest, most unselfish, most extraordinary kind. In Boaz and Ruth, Israel and the Gentiles are, as it were, personified. In order to come under the wings of Israel, nothing is needed but the love and faith of Ruth. The book, it is often said, with its contents, stands at the portal of the history of David; according to its spirit, it stands like the Psalms at the gates of the Gospel."

The character of Ruth impresses the universal heart. Painting and poetry have paid their homage to her. In galleries and parlors and places of resort the eye is ever meeting with pictures of the modest, sweet-faced woman gleaning in the field of Boaz. Wordsworth pays a beautiful tribute to the Book of Ruth.

I think in noticing that scene when Orpah turned back, and Ruth still clave to her mother-in-law, leaving sister, relatives, and country, and saying, "Whither thou goest, I will go," we are impressed with these three traits, — *Love, Purpose, Wisdom*. An artist, in attempting to express the conflicting emotions, and to show the character in the face, would

make these shine out most conspicuously. Every womanly grace might claim a place there, but these should be the speaking traits.

Love is said to be "strong as death; . . . many waters cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it." What is the Christian's watchword, motto, life, law, but *love*? Love has knit the heart of Ruth to that of Naomi, and now you see its strength. Persuasion does not move her; ties to sister and friends in the land of her birth are not adequate; poverty and ignorance of the people in the new country make no difference, — go she will. So delicate, timid women, under the power of love, have joined their fortunes to those who were going as missionaries to the heathen, and naught could restrain them from their high resolve. The happiest homes are forsaken, the dearest friends, the fairest country; trials innumerable are undergone, the heaviest tasks undertaken, sacrifices counted nothing, — it is the power of love! Doubtless in the home of Naomi this love had been growing and strengthening from day to day. It was not an impulse; if so, it could not have held out, — it was an ardent affection of the heart. How warm the language: "Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me!"

Then observe how firm and determined the *purpose*. The resolution was as strong as the love. There is sometimes strong love with a weak will. Then the person wavers; the heart inclines, but the motive power is gone. Ruth is fully persuaded; she has counted the cost, and what she says she intends to

do. Thus we see exhibited the strongest elements of character, — love and purpose. Nor can the artist attempt any more difficult union of qualities. It might be easy to paint the hard, stern features of a Cavalier, or the dull, inexpressive look of fleshly love. A common hand could delineate the sensuality of a Henry the Eighth, or the cunning and hate of a Catherine de' Medici, — the perfidious woman who was the chief instigator of the massacre 'of St. Bartholomew. Human skill can represent sordid passions more easily than it can those that are spiritual and divine. It was the two traits mentioned that were most conspicuous in the Saviour, — love and purpose; and hence you never see any picture or painting of Him, from that of Raphael — who is said never to have had a rival in composition and expression — down to the latest effort of brush or pencil, that satisfies the mind. It was a sign of progress when art forsook the insipid and sensual subjects of the Greek school, and found in the Holy Scriptures and in Christian worship a better field for its exertions. As historical painting is more difficult, and is of a higher order than landscape painting, so the painting of characters like those of Ruth and the Saviour requires the highest skill. No wonder that all fail. The *love* must be gentle, womanly, tearful, yet stronger than death; the *purpose* firm, invincible, robust, yet mingled with love.

To perfect these traits there must be *wisdom*. The love must be a wise love; the purpose a wise purpose. The more mind, the better the character and the better the picture. A loving look without intelli-

gence is flat; a wilful look without intelligence is brutal. Join love and purpose, and let soul, thought, reflection, understanding, beam through them, and you get the most perfect human face,—that which must have been Christ's, and must be the face of those who most resemble Him. We cannot for a moment think that Ruth was not influenced in her act by wisdom. She saw the difference between the two religions and between the character of Naomi and that of her own people. Besides, we must believe the Spirit of God influenced her in her choice. That it was a wise choice, subsequent events proved. It led her to fortune and renown, brought her into the royal line, and made her one of the most eminent of women. Never could she have regretted her decision. Even when an humble gleaner in the family of Naomi, she was happy; and then when united to the wealthy Boaz, she had greater reason to thank God for the way in which she had been led. She could not have foreseen the honor to come to her in making her son the grandfather of David, and placing her in the lineage of Christ. She acted according to her best convictions, yielded to the power of love, chose God and His people for her portion, and turned her back on home and country; and it proved the right way.

Dear friends, we have here brought to view the three grand traits that must inwrap themselves with your decisions for eternity. The human family may be said to be personified in Orpah and Ruth. The crisis of life is reached when the decision is made to go, or to return. Many are undecided, like Orpah, but

at length turn back to their people and their gods. They choose this world and its portion, and never see the heavenly country. It is a question for each, Which of these types shall represent you? It is not said of Orpah that she was ill-natured, abusive, or unkind, — only that she preferred not to go; and that is the fault with many of you. It may seem like leaving home, — a difficult, uncertain way, — and the future may appear very dark; but if you will commit your ways to God, you will walk securely, and reach heaven at last. To fail of heaven, it is only necessary that you stay where you are. You are making the decision. So long as you do not personally, solemnly, and earnestly choose God and His people for your portion, you are Orpah, and not Ruth.

The first grand requisite that you need is *love*, — to God and to man. Love is the fulfilling of the law; the ten commandments are summed up in this. Love is the displacement of self; love is the enthronement of God in the soul. Love is queen of the graces; Faith and Hope wait on Love. When this principle pervades the soul, it will show itself in active ways. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words." It will show itself in obedience, submission, service. If you love God, you will pray: say you love God, and never pray? You will love the Bible: have a friend, and value not a letter from him? You will love the Church, love God's people, love to do good, love to give, love to help on God's cause in every way. Love will suppress anger, resentment, pride, impatience; love will make you Christ-like. This is a grand possession, but it is not difficult of attainment. It is not

so much physical strength or mental power or earthly property; it is not such and such pilgrimages or tasks or forms that are required, — all that is asked is *love*. The poor man, the simple-minded, the little child, can love.

Next, you must have *purpose*: you must employ your will. What an assertion of will was that of Ruth! "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." You can never get to heaven if you do not will. Men do nothing if they do not will. The gospel cry is addressed to this faculty: "Whosoever *will*, let him come." Jesus charges the ruin of the soul to the will: "Ye *will* not come to Me, that ye may have life." If it were Ruth's purpose that you had, there would be no difficulty. When you rise from your indifference to say, "Thy people shall be My people," the question is settled, and you are going right. The great effort of all preaching is to induce men to make Ruth's choice. You simply say, "I will think about it; I will decide this question by and by." You feel the attachments to the country in which you are, and you are slow to respond to other appeals, or to assume obligations that involve such a change of purpose and life.

Making this choice, it will be the choice of *wisdom*. It was wise in Ruth to choose God's people for her people; it will be wise in you. No man ever did a wiser thing than to say in his inmost soul, "I am for God." The world you leave is vain, it does not satisfy; it even disappoints, worries, and tortures. It

does not give rest; it has no balm for sorrows; it furnishes no permanent home. There is little reason why we should love it or wish to stay in it. But the heavenly country abounds with that which should attract us thither. The way is rough to reach it, but once there, we shall rejoice that we have come. We shall be crowned as kings, occupy the prepared mansions, have the society of holy beings, and be eternally happy in the infinite love of God. Moab and Canaan are not so great a contrast as earth and heaven; Ruth's elevation is a feeble type of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to which the believer shall by and by come.

Dear Christian friends, we have left the Moab of this world, but are we not travelling alone? Shall we not induce our children and friends to go with us, and shall we not be a guide to those who may be pleased to accompany us? It would be an awful thing to mislead any pilgrims, or to discourage them from seeking the heavenly country. Possibly we are doing both. We ought to know whether our steps are directed aright. There are guide-boards and guide-books that show us the way,—the Israelites had even a pillar of cloud and of fire; the angel of God's presence saved them. And this presence and leadership we may enjoy. Are we marching to the heavenly Canaan? Can we say, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel"? Are we inviting others to go, pressing them to go, influencing them to go, and showing them the way? Our

character and life ought to be such that they will be attracted to our company, that even if pressed and drawn in the opposite direction they will still say, "We will go with you." We must not repel, we must draw. We must have so much of kind-heartedness, cordial interest, and good cheer that people shall love to walk where we walk. What Naomi was to Ruth, that we must be to the unconverted around us,—draw them with the cords of a man, bind them with the bands of love. We must make our company so pleasant that others who look in upon us shall wish to sojourn with us, that men who witness our walk shall say, "We will go with you." I mean not that by outward garniture or temporary expedients we should draw. These are well enough; but the real magnetism of a church is in the piety of the people: it is love that draws. Embellishments upon a dead church are like paint upon a corpse: the life is not there. Exterior prosperity is no evidence of a sound heart or of real fruitfulness. What is wanted is the interpenetrating love of Christ: the nearer we get to the Saviour, the more will His gospel become a power among the people. It was not grandeur, wealth, or fine prospects, that drew Ruth; it was not the popular voice or gay company: it was love. Naomi's character won; Naomi's guidance was safe; Naomi's God was the true God. "Call me not Naomi," said the mother-in-law to her friends, "call me Mara,"—call me not Pleasant, call me Bitter,— "for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." But that emptiness was antecedent to the highest pros-

perity and joy. So in our lowliest state we may supply the conditions of the highest usefulness, happiness, and power. There is a conjecture that the name Ruth means Rose. The Ancient Church represented Ruth pictorially with a sheaf in her hand. Both rose and sheaf are symbols signifying that Love is the attractive principle, the crowning grace, and reminding us of that Divine assurance, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

CREATED UNTO GOOD WORKS.

THAT for which each thing is created, it does without law and compulsion. The sun shines by nature unbidden ; the pear-tree bears of itself voluntarily ; three and seven ought not to be ten, they are ten already. There is no need that one should say to God, He should do good, for He does all the time willingly and gladly of Himself. So, too, one should not command the righteous man that he should do good works, for he does them without this, — without command and compulsion, — because he is a new creature and a good tree.

MARTIN LUTHER.

XXV.

CREATED UNTO GOOD WORKS.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. — EPH. ii. 10.

THERE is a seeming conflict between the Apostles Paul and James. The one lays emphasis upon faith; the other upon works. Yet both Paul and James are right. The text, "The just shall live by faith," expresses truth *in equilibrio*. It is like a balance, "just" being in one scale, and "faith" in the other; or it is like a see-saw, James being at one end, and Paul at the other. If James emphasizes "just," his side preponderates; if Paul emphasizes "faith," his side goes down. But neither claims entirety to himself; each is essential to the other. We mistake if we think faith is all. Paul believed in works. It is his words that we have chosen for the text. He says, "We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works." James is right when he says, "Faith without works is dead, being alone." Works prove faith. You say that a tree is alive because with the breath of spring its buds have begun to swell and the leaves are starting out. When it is full of blossoms, full-leaved, or heavy with fruit, you call it a vigorous tree, it gives

such evidence of life. So the Christian is fullest of faith when his life is most abundant of works; that is, if the works are not spurious, false, or feigned. You may, by covering a tree with verdure, make it look alive, when it is only a dead trunk mantled by a living vine. Or you may take a piece of timber and overspread it with tasteful decorations; but there is no life there. So when there is a sapless piety you sometimes see an appearance of life; but it is a life put on. You have only to wait for keen frosts or scorching heat to show the death within.

Now, the Scriptures insist on works as the evidence of faith. The object of our conversion is not simply to get us to heaven, but to bring into observation the reality, substance, proofs, and characteristics of a holy life. As the text says, "We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works." We are "chosen, that we should be holy and without blame." "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." We must get rid of the delusion that we are called into the Church as into a house of rest. We are called to be holy; we are created unto good works. When a man is converted, he enters on a life-service. If he thinks now he is safe, heaven is sure, and he may live as he pleases, it shows that he is not converted. If a person enters into your service, your thought is not that he has come to eat of your bread and enjoy your home, but to do your work. When a soldier enlists, it is not to put a feather in his hat and dress gayly, but to go out and fight, and if need be, die. So we are servants,

laborers, soldiers. The charge that we receive is, "Go, work;" "Endure hardness as a good soldier." This is the law. And then we have illustrations. Every sincere Christian is a worker. Paul was a worker. The works that he denounced were those legal, moral works that are sometimes substituted for faith. But the works that grow out of faith he preached and performed. He could say of himself, "In labors more abundant." So the blessed Master was a Man of works. He said, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." We have become accustomed to regard this as a law of Christian life, and even seek to rouse ourselves to activity — as soldiers kindle their enthusiasm by some battle-song — by putting into our Psalmody such hymns as, "Work, for the night is coming;" "Am I a soldier of the cross?" "Stand up, stand up for Jesus." Now, it may be that a theme so trite and that suggests labor is a burden in itself. You sigh, and say, "What more can I do?" Some of you are laborious, and you will be blessed; you are blessed, and you will be more blessed when those words are spoken, "Well done!" We should be thankful that the Church is a hive in which there are to be no drones. We should find comfort, too, in the thought that "Rest comes sure and soon." To the faithful, then, I say, "Toil on." If you grow weary *in* the work, be not weary *of* it. "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Still, it is possible that we are not as laborious as we ought to be, nor will a bustling activity in some things excuse neglect in others.

Let us look for a moment at the Work. This is as broad as Christian experience and human sympathy and love. If one is disposed, he will find much to do in self-culture. Then there is the family, the Church, and society. In all these fields we must toil; nor in one to the neglect of another. A proportionate labor in each produces the best-developed piety. I must not spend so much time abroad as to neglect my heart. I must see that my own soul is fed, or I shall soon have no strength to labor. Again, if I have a family, there are duties which no other can discharge. There is a vast amount of work in that little field of home; if we neglect our children, or let our home suffer, it will hardly compensate that we were very busy and very useful in other departments of labor. Then there is the Church, with its many calls, — meetings to be attended, services to be rendered, gifts to be bestowed. Society also has its claims. No man or woman has a right to become a hermit or a recluse. Only sickness should be a sufficient excuse for not mingling with others, showing kindness, welcoming the stranger, and cementing friendly bonds. Nor is work all activity. An obedient and a holy life may have much in it of quietness. When the Father's hand is upon us, it is a great thing to submit. When He says, "Be patient," or "Stand still," it is a great thing to obey. The greatest work may not be that which shows itself in heaped-up labors, but in the gentle readiness with which the bitter cup is drank, or the quiet steadiness with which the patient sufferer waits upon God. It is a pleasant service sometimes to run for the Master; it is a harder task simply to stand and wait. The feeble,

stricken child of God, on a bed of languishing, may feel that it is a poor service that he is rendering; but the kind Master values it more than days of toil. There is sometimes a disposition to inquire what we can do for the Master. We think we are willing to work, but we know not what to do. Our faith wants its outlets, and we wait to know what we can perform. But perhaps we want to do some great thing; we see the skilled laborers, and we are but little children. Let us be content to do the little things; let us, if the Master orders, simply stand and wait. But let us not be waiting unless we have a positive charge; let us, rather than be idle, take any service, however humble and small. It is not opportunities, but disposition, that we need. If it is nothing more, "let us gather up the sunbeams that lie around our path." If it is only love to men that we have, our name, like another Abou Ben Adhem, may lead all the rest. It is not the great things that are wanted, — but few can do the great things; it is those little common things that lie near to all.

"If you cannot speak like angels,
If you cannot preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus,
You can say He died for all.
If you cannot rouse the wicked
With the Judgment's dread alarms,
You can lead the little children
To the Saviour's waiting arms."

By way of fixing this subject of work in the mind, let me take the letters of the word, as an acrostic, and suggest for what each letter stands. This will show us the spirit in which we should work.

W stands for *willingly*. If God loves a cheerful giver, so He loves a cheerful worker. You like a cheerful worker. You want no one near you who goes sour and moping to his task. And what we do for the Master, we must do with gladness and a song. His service is not a painful service. And then we have His presence to encourage and His hand to help. "Cheerful workers!" What other sort of workers ought any to be? The Master Whom we serve is very kind, the work is very pleasant, and the wages are very good. It is unreasonable if we work reluctantly, or act like slaves scourged to a forbidding and ill-requited task. The service of Christ, from beginning to end, is a willing service. He calls for laborers, but He forces none; there is no impressment, no seizure, no compulsion. We are to "choose whom we will serve," and then, in the vineyard, are to work as if we liked to be there; not only not idle, but happy in our work. We grieve the Master, discourage others, and injure ourselves, if we act as if living and laboring for Christ were drudgery. Was it drudgery for Paul? Was it drudgery for the men that have died for Christ? What is the testimony from mission-fields and martyr stakes, but that it is a blessed service, abundant of recompense and full of joy.

O stands for *orderly*. There are methods and ends in work. Everything should be done "decently and in order." We should know how to "behave ourselves in the house of God." Work has its departments, its correspondent duties, its diversity in oneness. We are not to do other men's work; we are not to be busy here and there. We may work hard, and yet do but

little, or hinder others, or positively undo. Yonder is a factory full of workers; yet there is no confusion, interruption, or disorder, for each keeps in his own place, and has just a certain piece of work to do. There are scores of processes to produce a needle or a pin; from hand to hand it passes through stage after stage of labor, till at length it is brought to its perfected form. I recall a dental establishment in a large city. The building was large, and it was filled with workers. From the basement to the highest story it was work, work, work. Every conceivable thing needed in the profession was there, prepared or represented. On the lowest floor was the engine, with its glowing fires and powerful wheels. Here the rock quartz was crushed to an impalpable paste; there the ovens, hot as Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, did their work on the articles received. Yonder were the furnaces where were cast all the implements of the trade; here men were attending to the construction of plates, the preparation of substances, the moulding of forms. One floor was wholly occupied by women, who delicately arranged the articles for their fiery ordeal, placing them on porcelain plates that were slid into an immense oven. And what was striking here, was that each operative was obliged to connect her name with the work that the fire was to test. If there was any defect, the fire would show at whose door the fault lay. Such, I thought, is the Church. Not only is the fire to try every man's work, of what sort it is, but each has a special work to do. There is no getting on, only as we do what is assigned to us severally to do. If we jostle one another, or all try to do the same work,

or quarrel and interfere, there will not be much work done.

R stands for *regularly*. Some persons have their paroxysms. They are good workers, but they work only for a time. They are restless and uneasy, fickle and changeable, off and on, and so their doing comes to naught. The only piety of which these persons seem to have any knowledge is that associated with excitement and impulse. While the excitement lasts, they do well; but the excitement does not last. Some men are constitutionally unsteady, they stick to nothing; and hence it is not to be expected that their piety will be constant and firm. Some are dependent on the state of things around them; they need a fresh breeze and a clear sky. When it is dark they are dark; there is no faith or hope to work and wait for the morning. Others will work while the rest work; instead of doing more because some are discouraged or are idle, they do less. And so it comes to pass that there is a great deal of irregularity in our methods of toil. We are now on the mount, and now in the vale. It is now a gallop and a bound, and now snail-crawling and slow progress. A revival comes, and things go well. But soon there is a falling off; forms that were seen in the congregation are seen no more; voices that were heard in the prayer-meeting are heard no more; work that was undertaken with zest is now abandoned; the family altar was reared, but it is now a ruin. Of course it is impossible to be perfectly regular and steady in all our church work,—sickness or changes will interrupt; but we need not therefore justify a fickle and volatile piety. “Unstable as water,

thou shalt not excel ; ” and if we do not have a piety of principle, and are not constant and true, our work, if it be work, will be of little avail. Let us not forget that *R* in the word work !

K stands for *knowingly*. We need to know what to do, and how to do it. If we are willing, and ask with Paul, “What wilt Thou have me to do?” the Lord will show us work enough ; and then if we seek the wisdom that we need, He will make us intelligent and efficient workers. There is work for all, as I suggested, — in respect to ourselves, the family, the Church, and society. Be sure that you are willing to work, and then inquire what you shall do. If you are not filling up all your time, if you are not as useful as you might be, report to those who can give you work, or look up work for yourself ; be intent on doing something ; put yourself where your services shall find opportunity and sphere. And then when employed, it is important to be intelligently active. There is a zeal not according to knowledge. What wisdom do parents need to train their children aright ! How intelligent should Sabbath-school teachers be, rightly to expound the Word of God ! What a knowledge of human nature should every Christian possess to give him influence, and enable him to say and do the right thing ! Some church members seem reckless of consequences, on the plea that they are very active ; but Christ told His disciples to “be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” It is a good thing to be a worker, but it is better to be an intelligent worker. We need to see that our labor contributes to the general good ; that we are not interfering with or hindering others ; that what we do is what is needed, and is done well.

Thus in the word *Work* we get hints as to the manner in which our labors should be performed: *W*—Willingly; *O*—Orderly; *R*—Regularly; *K*—Knowingly.

My friends, let me charge you to remember that there is no time for trifling here. "Go work," is the command,—"work to-day; for the night cometh." With some it is high noon, or the shadows are lengthening. How does your work get on? What are you doing for the Master? What fruit can you show? It is not what do men think of you, what plaudits do you win, or how much of a sensation and stir are you making in the world. No, no; but what blessed influence are you exerting, and what ineffaceable impressions making upon the hearts of men? Soon we shall be gone; but our works shall follow us, here and in eternity. Our names may perish, but our deeds shall live on.

"He who ploughed and who sowed is not missed by the reaper;
He is only remembered by what he has done.
Not myself, but the truth that in life I have spoken,
Not myself, but the seed that in life I have sown,
Shall pass on to ages; all about me forgotten,
Save the truth I have spoken, the things I have done.
So let my living be, so be my dying,
So let my name be unblazoned, unknown.
Unpraised and unmissed, I shall still be remembered;
Yes, but remembered by what I have done."

Are there not some here who are willing to work for Christ who have not as yet engaged in His service? Christ calls you; His charge is, "Go work to day in My vineyard." He asks in amazement, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" There is much work to be

done, and the Church needs your aid. You must not think it is enough to stand out of the way of others. You may be in the way ; you may keep others from Christ by not coming yourself. But if you are in nobody's way, is that enough? If there is a fire to be extinguished, and you keep out of the way, is that enough? If there is a life to be saved, and you do not hinder another's saving it, have you done your whole duty? What is wanted is, that you come into the Church and help it on. It is not for you to say what you can and what you cannot do. The Master calls, and you must obey. He will see that you are not overtaxed, and He will accept your feeblest efforts. He will help you if your task seems hard, and He will make your labors a joy to yourself and a blessing to others. More, He will give you a special reward. See, this is what He says: "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you." Moreover an Apostle exhorts, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." No one is asking you to work without pay; Jesus promises it, — and it is the best possible that was ever given. Will you, then, enter this service? Here is the vineyard; here is a place for you. Come! For Christ's sake, for others' sake, for your own sake, do as God commands.

THE END.

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